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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

### **INTERSTATE COMMUNICATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?**

by

Anthony Bessone

September 2007

Thesis Co-Advisors:

James A. Russell  
Peter R. Lavoy

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**INTERSTATE COMMUNICATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:  
CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the utility of alternative theories for evaluating interstate bargaining frameworks as described by Thomas Schelling and Robert Jervis. Can states expect to operationalize coercive and compellant bargaining frameworks as asserted by Thomas Schelling. Or, as suggested by Robert Jervis, is the system of interstate bargaining and communications fatally compromised by perceptions and misperceptions in such a way that makes predictable coercive and compellant bargaining frameworks all but impossible?<sup>1</sup> This thesis examines a case study involving Iran's nuclear program and how it is or is not influenced by Israel and the United States, and identifies which theoretical framework, if any, best explains the functioning of the bargaining framework nation's for the participants.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970), 9.



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The power to hurt is bargaining power. To exploit it is diplomacy—vicious diplomacy, but diplomacy. — Thomas C. Schelling<sup>2</sup>

### **A. PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Are the theories suggested by Thomas Schelling and Robert Jervis validated or invalidated by the current nuclear stand off between Iran and the West? The purpose of this thesis is to examine the utility of the interstate bargaining frameworks described by Schelling and Jervis that propose fundamentally different frameworks for understanding the effectiveness of the signaling process between sovereign nations. It will seek to test the two competing theoretical models using the current standoff over Iran's nuclear program, which involves a complicated bargaining framework that includes Iran, Israel, and the United States. The case will be used to illustrate the value of the respective theoretical frameworks.

The importance of this issue is that effective communication is an essential component to the success of negotiations and interactions on all levels. An unstable bargaining framework that results from inadequate or flawed communication between nations can lead to escalation of conflict and war through miscalculation or purely by accident. In the case of Iran's nuclear program, a potential war could include nuclear weapons, which would then likely involve the United States and various regional actors. In fact, the ensuing conflict, caused by miscommunications, could spread throughout the region and, as such, have global economic and political implications.

### **B. BACKGROUND**

The United States stands alone today as the world's only remaining super power. The fall of the Soviet Union signaled in a new era of political and military dominance by the United States (U.S.). However, the effectiveness of the U.S. to influence other nations

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<sup>2</sup> Schelling and Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, *Arms and Influence*, 2.

to behave in a desirable manner congruent with the national objectives of the U.S. is questionable. Today the world is faced with an Iranian regime's quest for nuclear technologies. There is a popular consensus that Iran seeks to develop a nuclear weapon. Many believe that Iran's covert program is cloaked in rhetoric which claims that the Iranian people have the right to nuclear technologies, is just a cover for a covert nuclear weapons program. How is the international community supposed to decipher these signals?

### **1. Persian Principles**

As mentioned above, through multiple public statements and newspaper articles, Iran is currently marketing to the world its desire for nuclear technologies under the guise of its need for alternative energy sources. These noteworthy statements might be entirely true. However, Iran's history of involvement with terrorist organizations and its less-than-commendable cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have caused many to doubt these claims.<sup>3</sup> As an apparent act of good faith, Iran signed the IAEA's additional protocol which would allow "snap" inspections of its facilities by IAEA experts.<sup>4</sup> However, the months following the signing of the additional protocol saw several instances of declining cooperation and eventual defiance.

Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, Iran has had strained or non-existent relations with several countries, most notably the United States, and has been alleged to be engaged in varying levels of dubious activities with Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations. The lack of formal relations between the United States and the Iranians is further complicated by Tehran's insistence on enriching its own uranium enrichment technology and on developing a plutonium reprocessing capability. The problem the West has with Iran enriching uranium is that by gaining the knowledge on how to do that, scientists are not far from gaining the technologies they need for making weapons-grade

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<sup>3</sup> John R. Crook, "Ongoing U.S. Efforts to Curb Iran's Nuclear Program." *The American Journal of International Law* 100, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): 480-485. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 7, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> "Iran Signs Additional Protocol on Nuclear Safeguards," December 18, 2003. <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2003/iranap20031218.html> (accessed September 7, 2006).

nuclear material. The ongoing dialogue being held between Iran, Germany, France, and Great Britain (EU-3) has been tenuous at best, and highlights the difficulty of negotiating with the Iranian regime over the nuclear issue.

To link the nuclear issue directly to the current regime is to naively disregard decades of scientific research on the part of Iran. Iran signed the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) under the Shah, and by doing so, established its right under the treaty to develop nuclear power under international oversight. All NPT signatory states have the right to take advantage of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and countries such as France and the United States are obliged to lend technologies and support for these endeavors. However, in the case of Iran, it has repeatedly broken the NPT rules and as a result, find themselves in the position they are today.

Iran's leaders also frame their pursuit of a nuclear program in the context of Israel's unmonitored nuclear program, which places the entire region under a nuclear shadow. To Iran and much of the Arab world, Israel is the dominant regional power – a dominance that requires some sort of regional and heretofore lacking regional counterbalance. Iran's leaders frequently cite the alleged double standard shown by the to states such as Israel, India an Pakistan. These very same countries receive substantial amounts of economic aid from the U.S., so in a sense, they are being rewarded for breaking with international norms, while the Iranians are held to an essentially higher standard. The question for the Iranians is often as simple as: 'Why should we abide by the NPT treaty at all?' <sup>5</sup>

## **2. Israel's Stance**

From the Israeli perspective, despite their nuclear and conventional military superiority, the long-term outlook for their future security appears bleak. Hezbollah and Hamas are both widely reported to be supported by Iran and each party has a history of armed conflict with Israel. At the moment, the Israelis have the strategic military upper

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<sup>5</sup> Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran Threatens Pullout From Nuclear Treaty; U.S. Backs Push for Tehran to Stop Enrichment: [Final Edition]." *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 7, 2006).



hand, but they rightfully fear non-conventional weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. They have gone on record as saying that they will not allow Iran to have nuclear weapons as they see the potential for proliferation and the immediate danger to Israel as quite high.<sup>6</sup> Is this, too, a bluff or do they already have a real plan?

Military analysts question whether the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) can militarily eliminate Iran's nuclear infrastructure.<sup>7</sup> The logistics of a long-range assault by Israel are monumental, though Israel has a history of mounting long-range strikes against threatening targets in the region -- Osirak (1981) and Tunis (1985). It is unclear whether Israel is willing to risk the probable overwhelming backlash from sympathetic Palestinians or Arabs. Does Israel intend to strike Iran and does it intend to contemplate using its own nuclear arsenal to stop Iran from achieving a nuclear capability – despite repeated statements that Israel will not be the first regional state to introduce nuclear weapons into any Middle East crisis?<sup>8</sup> Israel's strategic air power, combined with its nuclear arsenal, should by all accounts be quite an effective coercive force for Iran to consider. For now, however, this does not seem to be the case.

### **3. American Diplomacy**

The United States has a vested interest in this issue as it directly affects its national security. Currently the U.S. supports diplomacy to resolve the issue but reserves the right to all options. Several times, U.S. officials, including the president, have gone on record to say that they will not rule out the military option in preventing the Iranians from obtaining nuclear weapons.<sup>9</sup> The Iranians' apparent response to which is to

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<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, "Israel: Iran must not acquire nuclear weapons," <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/01/17/olmert.iran/> (accessed March 17, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Arie O'Sullivan, "IAF: Osirak attack shows partial feasibility enough for Iran strike," *Jerusalem Post*, israel.jpost.com (January 12, 2006). <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1136361084399&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Walter Pincus, "Israel Has Sub-Based Atomic Arms Capability: [Final Edition]." *The Washington Post*, June 15, 2002, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed March 17, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> "Bush: 'All options are on the table' regarding Iran's nuclear aspirations," Associated Press, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-08-13-bush-iran-nuclear\\_x.htm/](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-08-13-bush-iran-nuclear_x.htm/) (accessed March 13, 2006).

perceive such statements as a threat. But is it a direct threat, or a coercive tool to benefit U.S. objectives? It may well be just pure rhetoric, but regardless, it is indeed a strong signal. It is debatable at many levels whether the U.S. has adequate logistics or political capital to strike Iran. So the question remains: What avenues can the U.S. effectively pursue in obtaining its Arab regional goals?

## **C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW**

### **1. Coercion/Compellance Theory (Schelling)**

Coercion is defined as the practice of compelling a person to involuntarily behave in a certain way (whether through action or inaction) by use of threats, intimidation or some other form of pressure or force. In both of his books, *Arms and Influence* and *The Strategy of Conflict*, Thomas Schelling asserts that there is a direct link between a country's nuclear force and its ability to use that force in a coercive manner in the interstate bargaining process.<sup>10</sup> That is to say, that by possessing nuclear weapons, a nation is in a better position to bargain for what it wants in the international arena.

Indeed the threat of mutual assured destruction was a powerful military deterrent between the two major cold war adversaries, the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. However, what Schelling is suggesting is that by introducing the fact that one nation has a strategic advantage over another, this advantage should influence the second party's decision and thought process in diplomatic negotiations with the former. The theory suggests that the threat of force may inevitably influence a nation's action out of fear or intimidation.

As presented by Schelling, one of the main arguments that are useful in this discussion, is not the efficient application of force but the political exploitation of that potential force.<sup>11</sup> In essence, a threat does not actually have to be carried out in order for it to be effective; just knowing that it is a possibility is enough. However, there are issues

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<sup>10</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, & *Arms and Influence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 5.

such as credibility that must be accounted for in the bargaining framework. The threat by the aggressor has to be credible in order for it to be efficacious and its credibility may be linked to the costs and risks associated with carrying it out by the party making the threat.<sup>12</sup> In order for threats of violence and the threats of force to be effective, they must also be anticipated and they must be avoidable.<sup>13</sup> By anticipating the violent action, and then given a viable choice in the matter, a leader can decide on an alternate course of action, whereas given no option, the leader will most likely act in the same manner as a dog backed into a corner and lash out at everything and everyone.

Compellance presents a situation that is similar in nature to deterrence and coercion but differs at the same time. Deterrence of an adversary seeks to present to the opponent a situation such that they are deterred from taking any action that the former would not approve of. Compellance, rather than deter action, seeks to influence a course of action already in motion such that it is changed to be in line with the objectives and interests of the nation with the higher prestige or more dominant position. Put another way, to compel an adversary into action, the nation that takes the initiative must place enough momentum in motion to force the latter to change its policy objectives or face the consequences.<sup>14</sup>

## **2. Communication and Perceptions in Interstate Communication (Jervis)**

Another aspect of the international bargaining process involves images, the projections of those images, and the way they are perceived. Specifically, this refers to the way a nation wishes its position or policy on an issue to be perceived by internal and external political actors. That being said, the nature of the images portrayed is influenced not only by the sender and his/her message, but by the medium and context in which that message is conveyed, and the current positive or negative relationship between the sender and the receiver.

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<sup>12</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Schelling and Harvard University, Center for International Affairs. *Arms and Influence*, 2 .

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 72.

Robert Jervis, in his works *The Logic of Images in International Relations* and *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* states that interstate communications are, for all intents and purposes, ineffective, and difficult if not impossible to attain.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence, diplomats are often left with escalating rhetoric and tensions, which eventually, in most cases, lead to conflict. The reasons why this ineffectiveness occurs when projecting images or signals, range from false signals or misinterpreted signals to unintended signals sent by the particular actors. Then there are issues of the credibility of the sender and the message sent. To further complicate the process, there are even cases of valid and desired signals that were sent, but, for various reasons, were not accepted as valid.

There are multiple factors that influence perceptions and misperceptions, all of which are subject to various expectations and interpretations that are as diverse as they are potentially confusing. History has shown that rarely has a state's historical action been an accurate indicator of how it plans to act in the future.<sup>16</sup> A common yet potent example used by Jervis is the way Hitler convinced the world he was peaceful and, for a time, had policies to back up his claims. History, as it is written, speaks of the horrific and tragic story that clearly does not match the initial signals quite convincingly portrayed by the Nazi regime.

#### **D. A LOOK INTO THE CURRENT SIGNALING PROCESS**

Signaling can be divided into two basic categories: direct communications and tacit communication.<sup>17</sup> A common medium for issuing direct signals in the information age is to issue public statements addressing the press or a given government assembly, which in most cases will have press representations. Because of the improvements in communication and the advent of the Internet, the press is able to quickly and efficiently

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<sup>15</sup> Jervis and Harvard University, Center for International Affairs. *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, 9

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 9, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Peter R. Lavoy, "Managing South Asia's Nuclear Rivalry: New Policy Challenges for the United States," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Fall-Winter 2003. Available on the internet, <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/vol10/103/103lavoy.pdf>, (accessed August 30, 2006), 90.

get the message out to all corners of the world. Signals are not limited to press releases and public addresses. Tacitly, they can include military force deployments, missile testing, troop maneuvers, or military exercises and may be more reliable than direct communication because the signals are viewed more seriously.<sup>18</sup> For the purposes of research and to site examples of signals sent, there are more readily identifiable cases to be found in the press and on various public and government sponsored web sites.

Among all the countries commonly referenced in the Arab region, few have to routinely signal to would-be adversaries more than Israel. Israel essentially stands alone in the Middle East and is surrounded by a majority of seemingly hostile nations that would like nothing more than to see the Israeli state disappear from the region.<sup>19</sup> However, the message from the Israelis to the rest of the world, since their inception, has been a plea to accept its existence. They have used military force, fighting both internal and external battles to prove their resolve. To that end, Israel has signaled a policy that it will not be the first nation in the region to introduce nuclear weapons into a conflict, yet reserves the right to respond according to actual hostile actions and perceived threats.<sup>20</sup> Israel has a history of being proactive in assuring its security with the most notable example being the Osirak strike in the early 1980s on the Iraqi nuclear facility.<sup>21</sup> On the international and domestic scene, Israel, like Iran, is also engaged in the signaling process and has, in the past, reminded Iran that Israel does and will continue to have the power to respond to Iranian aggressions.

Iran has a perceived security dilemma in that it sees a threat to its sovereignty on multiple fronts.<sup>22</sup> It is Iran's desire to deter Israel and others from striking its nuclear

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<sup>18</sup> Lavoy, "Managing South Asia's Nuclear Rivalry," 91.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Williams, "Israel's Current U.N. Offensive Gets By With a Little Help From Its Enemies." *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 24, no. 9 (December 1, 2005): 34-35. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 7, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, 143.

<sup>21</sup> Ehsaneh I. Sadr, "The Impact of Iran's Nuclearization on Israel" *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 58-72. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 6, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Paul Kerr, "Reports Grow That U.S. Plots Strike Against Iran." *Arms Control Today*, 36, no. 4 (May 1, 2006): 32, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 6, 2006).

facilities as well as enhancing its image/prestige in the region. Iran also desires respect and credibility in the international arena and wants to be recognized as a regional hegemony. The question remains: is Iran projecting power and prestige through rhetoric or is there something else at work which has yet to be revealed? The Iranians are signaling both externally and internally on a multitude of issues. They are signaling to Israel and to the international community, as well as signaling to their own internal support structure, in an effort to retain the status quo both at home and abroad.

The overall question that the entire world wants to know is: what is the true intention of the Iranian nuclear program? Is it really for peaceful purposes or are they after “the bomb”? Evidence presented to date strongly suggests that they are after nuclear weapons. However, this evidence is not entirely 100 percent conclusive. Those who dare, make the assertion based on the evidence in question, that there can only be but one reason for all the secrecy and trickery when dealing with the West and IAEA over the nuclear issue. The “we will bury you” rhetoric from Tehran suggests that the Iranian regime is serious when it says that it wishes to cause harm to Israel and assert its perceived role in the world order. However, is this threat real or a form of saber rattling to gain international prestige and notoriety? Perhaps it is just a ploy to deflect public attention away from the myriad domestic issues that plague the current Iranian regime. The signals coming from Iran are colorful and mixed, at best, and what its intentions are is currently a mystery.

Shelling, in his studies, noted that the rationality of an adversary is relevant and that fanatical leaders are similar to small children in that they cannot often be controlled by threats.<sup>23</sup> President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is viewed by many Western observers as being a madman, and irrational. While this would be a convenient excuse for Western politicians to form aggressive policies to counter his rhetoric, it does little in the way of coming to an agreement on what will make the international community more at ease.

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<sup>23</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 6.

Under President Ahmadinejad, the West has heard tough talk and harsh rhetoric from both the Iranian president and other key representatives of the Iranian government. This would include outlandish statements such as implying that the Holocaust did not occur and that Israel should be wiped off the map.<sup>24</sup> The Israelis' recent response to this war of words was to publicly remind Iran that it, too, has the potential to be destroyed, as articulated by Deputy PM Shimon Peres.<sup>25</sup> With headlines and associated quotes being what they are, the entire world is staying tuned to the developments.

## E. SUMMARY

In deciding what is the most accurate indicator for determining a nation's intent, two scholars, Jervis and Schelling, have developed theoretical frameworks which may hold the key. Robert Jervis posits that the interstate bargaining system is ineffective at best and problematic at worst. Thomas Schelling on the other hand, suggests that compellence, coercion, and deterrence can be applied by a nation in order to achieve its desired goals and objectives as part of the interstate bargaining process.<sup>26</sup> The question presented revolves around this notion: do either of these theories have a foundation that would allow the observer to determine the intent of the nation in question?

Many analysts suspect that Iranian leadership clearly desires nuclear weapons and that they have had a "secret" weapons program for several years.<sup>27</sup> In his works *The Strategy of Conflict* and *Arms and Influence*, Schelling puts forth the concept that nuclear weapons can serve as a powerful coercive bargaining instrument for policy makers.<sup>28</sup> There can be no clearer way of becoming a regional hegemony than by obtaining a

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<sup>24</sup> "THE WORLD; Iranian President Says Israel Should Be 'Wiped Off the Map'; Ahmadinejad's harsh rhetoric marks a sharp departure from his predecessor's policy. The U.S. and others condemn the speech: [Home Edition]." *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 2005, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil> (accessed September 7, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Mark Willacy, Israel warns Iran against attack. ABC News Online. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/20060605/s1633716.htm> (accessed May 9, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Cirincione, "Controlling Iran's Nuclear Program." *Issues in Science and Technology*, 22, no. 3 (April 1, 2006): 75-82. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed September 7, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 6.

nuclear device. Unfortunately for Iran, the majority of the free world does not wish to see a nuclear-armed Iran. However, it is not currently clear that this is the true Iranian intent.

Can compellence or coercion be effectively implemented to persuade the Iranians to yield to the commonly held world view of nonproliferation in the Middle East? Obviously, the Iranians have national self interests, as do all nations, and are signaling to the world their rights as a nation to pursue those interests as well as the repercussions of other nations interfering with that right. The extent of the validity of the signals sent is something that remains to be determined. At stake is not only nuclear power and potential nuclear proliferation, but national sovereignty or the ability for a country to lead its own destiny. To the Iranians, nuclear power is not a privilege, but an inalienable right.<sup>29</sup>

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent statements, while seemingly over-dramatic, are in fact messages and strong signals. However, the true nature of the message and to whom these signals are intended is not clear. Are state actors such as Iran compelled to act in a manner congruent with international community desires just because a powerful nation such as the United States has nuclear weapons, and are they themselves seeking nuclear weapons or technologies? Given the current signaling framework that is in place, is it even possible to know, under the best or worst of conditions, what the intent of a nation is?

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<sup>29</sup> "Spokesman: Iran not after bargaining on nukes," IranFocus.com, March 5, 2006, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=6080> (accessed March 15, 2006).



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## II. ISRAEL: CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

### A. INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the Jewish state, Israeli citizens have lived in a higher state of awareness due to years of conflict with the surrounding Arab nations. Having peace treaties with only two Arab countries, Egypt and Jordan, Israel is surrounded by multiple Arab and Islamic enemies, not to mention numerous hostile non-state actors. As such, they have become accustomed to the daily threat to peace and are used to the idea of defending their nation at whatever means necessary. Since the 1950s, Israel has relied on deterrence as one of the overarching components to its national security strategy.<sup>30</sup> While the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran does not negate the deterrent value of the ambiguous Israeli arsenal, it certainly does cause the Israelis to be concerned. At the moment, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has the strategic advantage, but this is viewed by them to be in jeopardy due to the precarious Iranian activities. The fear is not as much of a nuclear-armed Iran, but more about whether the Iranians could maintain positive custody of the device and not let it fall into radical hands. With that in mind, Iran has consistently found ways to harass and threaten Israel for nearly three decades.

The threats to Israel's peace and stability from Tehran come in more than one form. While not engaged in declared direct combat with Israel, Iran has been assessed to be fighting a proxy war with Israel through the funding of Hezbollah. By using suicide bomb tactics during the early 1980s, the Iranian backed terrorists known as Hezbollah, were able to "persuade" three powerful western governments, including Israel, to withdraw their forces from Lebanon. Having been backed by Iran and supported by Syria, the Hezbollah gained notoriety for this and other political successes and undoubtedly gained the attention of would-be extremists for this very same reason.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph Uri Bar, "The Paradox of Israeli Power," *Survival*, 46, no. 4 (January 1, 2004): 137. <http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/routledg/00396338/v46n4/s9.pdf?expires=1158551463&id=31744466&titleid=3440&accname=Naval+Postgraduate+School&checksum=B18DF5D1F57F5040726586A503DFDEA3/> (accessed September 17, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press, 2002) 128.

While Hamas and Hezbollah are not the focus of the Iranian/Israeli relationship, they are part of it. This chapter will explore several of the issues that influence the way Israel signals internally and externally from its borders. In the end, a conclusion shall be drawn as to whether the approach they are using is effective in conveying their influence and intentions to Iran in regards to the Iranian nuclear program.

## **B. ISRAELI INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES**

Israel, like all nations, wishes to coexist in peace with its neighbors. However, since the 1979 Iranian revolution, Iran has been less than hospitable to Israel as shown through its support of various hostile organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Few would question that a nuclear-armed Iran would cause Israel to feel that their national security is threatened, especially after the callous statements from President Ahmadinejad concerning the Holocaust and Israel being wiped off the map. Iran has made statements on repeated occasions warning against attacks on its soil and that it would retaliate in kind. The United States, for its part, has said that it would defend Israel if Israel is attacked as a result of Iranian threats but this does not alleviate the Israeli fears and concerns. According to a recent Israeli official statement, “We are liable to face an Iranian missile attack,” Pensioners Minister Rafi Eitan told Israel Radio, “The Iranians have said very clearly that if they come under attack, their primary target would be Israel.”<sup>32</sup> This is a valid concern and the reality of the situation is that Israel is a fraction of the size of its surrounding neighbors and cannot afford to sustain widespread damage. One or two nuclear strikes would devastate a vast majority of the population, and to the Israelis, this is an unacceptable loss, which fosters much of the thought process of the Israeli government. Peace and security for its people are prime goals for Israel and the possession of a nuclear weapon in Iranian hands would do little to foster those ideals.

There is also growing concern that a nuclear-armed Iran would likely destabilize the Middle East region. Due to the nature of the Shi’a regime, most of Iran’s Sunni

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<sup>32</sup> “Eitan: Ready shelters for Iran attack,” *Jerusalem Post*, August 22, 2006.  
<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525922347&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>  
(accessed September 9, 2006).

neighbors view Tehran with constant doubt and suspicion. Centuries of conflicts and animosities will not disappear easily as old, repeated wounds of betrayal heal slowly. Now, as a consequence of Iran obtaining a nuclear device, it can be easily assumed that Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and perhaps other Arab states would soon follow suit, as they too would likely feel insecure with a nuclear-armed Iran, and could not stand to be at a strategic disadvantage for long. As it stands now, the nuclear ambiguity that surrounds the Israeli Defense Force has, for years, been a source of political rhetoric for many in the region but, has yet to really destabilize or cause an Arab/Israeli arms race.

### **1. Israeli State of Mind**

Since its birth, Israel has been continuously surrounded by Arab states that question Israel's validity and would like nothing more than to see the state disappear. While they live in a troubled region, the Israelis currently have an undeclared, yet widely accepted, strategic advantage over their surrounding neighbors, much to the dismay of the Israeli opposition. Just prior to the 1967 War, Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol ordered the arming of the first pair of nuclear weapons.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, since that time in history, the Jewish state has lived under the implied nuclear umbrella of the United States, while simultaneously relying on its own undeclared capability to influence its neighbors.

Tragically, Israel has never known what peace really means and has technically been at war for decades. There have been struggles from the Golan Heights in the north to the once-occupied Sinai in the south. As a result of this constant state of readiness, Israel has come up with several solutions to the long term problems it faces. The first solution is that Israel relies on technological superiority over vast numbers for its defense. It essentially had no choice but to use technology to overcome lack of manpower. The second solution Israel came up with to ensure its survival, was to create an extensive and efficient reserve system. In and around Israel, military forces can be seen in and out of

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<sup>33</sup> William E. Burrows and Robert Windrem, *Critical Mass. The Dangerous Race for Superweapons in a Fragmenting World* (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 283.

uniform with weapons ready, and this serves as a sobering reminder of the daily difficulties that Israel faces and sends a message to advisories that the Israelis are no easy target.

## **2. The Existential Threat**

Currently, Iran is widely considered the biggest threat to the Israelis. The Arabs in the region, most of whom are closer to Tehran than Israel, view the Israeli nuclear arsenal as the main security threat to the region.<sup>34</sup> However, it bears repeating that Israel has never publicly admitted to having nuclear weapons, and if there was ever a consensus among Israeli citizens, it would most likely be that there is a strong need for nuclear capabilities and a successful nuclear ambiguity policy.<sup>35</sup> Recent inflammatory and threatening Iranian statements have not been ignored by the Israeli government as most have been met with subtle responses. In the Israeli conscious, there can never be a time when they take such harsh rhetoric lightly because history has shown them what awaits those who fail to maintain a cautious mindset. Furthermore, for the political leadership in Israel, there is constant scrutiny for action and inaction, and to not acknowledge Iranian threats would be both political suicide and extremely dangerous foreign policy.

Yet while the Israelis acknowledge the deplorable and inexcusable rhetoric emanating from Iran, they realize that it is best not to engage in a conflict with Iran alone. They have been very careful to align similar national security interests with allied concerns. For example, as the United States desires a regime change in Iran, so too do the Israelis, especially when they see the generous aid given by the Iranians to Hezbollah in south Lebanon.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Tariq Khonji, "Nuclear pressure on Israel urged," *The Gulf Daily News*, Vol XXIX NO. 175, Manama. September 11, 2006. <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=155376&Sn=BNEW&IssueID=29175>, (accessed September 10, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Asher Arian, July 1998, Israeli Public Opinion on National Security Memorandum No. 49. Ch. V. Nuclear Arms and Arms Control. Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew I. Killgore, "Neocons plot regime change in Iran," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 22, no. 10 (December 1, 2003): 17. <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 9, 2006).

Israel had also been quite observant of the growing trends in the surrounding region. In an interview with French Television Three, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres urged the international community to thwart Iran's attempt at obtaining a "religious empire" throughout the Middle East. According to Peres, "The problem, once again, lies with the religious ambitions of the Persians. That is why many people, even among Arabs, are against Hezbollah and the Iranians. They want to maintain the Middle East as an Arab place, not an Iranian religious empire."<sup>37</sup> The Israelis, in their view, clearly see a threat in the Iranian regime and are not afraid to elevate the issue in the public conscious or to manipulate the concerns of Americans or Arabs in order to obtain Israeli objectives.

## **C. BARGAINING STRATEGIES**

As mentioned, Israel has a policy of nuclear ambiguity. Whenever Israel feels the need, usually after being threatened, they allude to the fact they may possess nuclear devices, which should signal to their enemies to think twice about military actions or threats of military action against Israel. By engaging adversaries like Iran in this manner, the Israelis have, in all likelihood, prevented large scale wars, but obviously not the lower intensity daily conflicts such as those with Hamas, Hezbollah, and other terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, strategies have not been limited solely to veiled nuclear threats as seen in what follows.

### **1. Subtle Flexing Under the Umbrella**

In 2000, Israel acquired three Dolphin class diesel submarines from Germany. Normally this would not be cause for much concern or speculation; however, it was revealed that during the purchase, Israel had stipulated that four of the torpedo tubes must be of a diameter considerably larger than normal torpedo tubes. What analysts speculate

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<sup>37</sup> "Iran wants 'religious empire' in Middle East: Israel" AFP, PARIS (August 10, 2006). [http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20060810/wl\\_mideast\\_afp/mideastconflictisrael\\_060810124419/](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20060810/wl_mideast_afp/mideastconflictisrael_060810124419/) (accessed September 9, 2006).

is that the tubes are for nuclear-capable cruise missiles.<sup>38</sup> Granted, the specific nuclear capability of the Israeli military is not public knowledge and is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is quite logical to infer the probable deterrence value of such a capability to an adversary such as Iran. The tacit nature of the signal sent suggests to the Iranians, and other would-be adversaries, that they had better think twice before attacking Israel as they do not know the location of the retaliatory strike that is sure to follow any nuclear aggression. If Israel really wanted the information about the torpedo tubes kept a secret, then the world would not have this information. Therefore, by logical deduction, the message has been sent that they have increased potential capabilities and for their potential adversaries to take heed of this ability. News leaks such as this serve the Israelis well in that they send a message of capability to those able and willing to listen.

Early in February 2006, President Bush was quoted as saying that the United States would come to Israel's defense if Iran's warlike rhetoric was actually seen into fruition. The Israelis were elated at such a strong message from the U.S. president and seized the opportunity to send a complementary signal of their own when Israeli Ambassador Daniel Aylon replied; "This proves once again the United States is the best friend and ally of Israel... We are very proud of this special relationship, which is the cornerstone of stability in the Middle East, for the mutual benefit of Israel, the U.S. and all peace-loving countries in the region and beyond."<sup>39</sup> This particular behavior takes advantage not so much of a direct threat of reprisal, but more of a warning clearly suggesting that if Iran attacks Israel, they attack the United States, which given the strength of its nuclear arsenal, should deter Tehran.

Furthermore, in the spring of 2006, Israel announced the creation of a new command to combat the rising Iranian threat. Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Dan Halutz appointed Israel Air Force Commander Major General Elyezer Shkedy to be the

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas R. Stauffer "Israel expands its nuclear threat thanks to German "donation" of Dolphin subs." *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. 22, no. 10 (December 1, 2003): 12-13. <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed September 6, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> Glenn Kessler. "Bush Says U.S. Would Defend Israel Militarily," *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

IDF's "campaign manager" against countries that do not border Israel, which strongly suggests their number one nemesis, Iran. This appointment came prior to the breakout of hostilities in Lebanon and is indicative of the rising tensions between Iran and Israel.<sup>40</sup> While Israel is dealing with the continuing situation in Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank, it is also signaling outwardly that it has been paying attention to other threats and has taken steps to counter these threats.

## **2. Hot, Cold, or Lukewarm**

Israeli officials have not always been as consistently vocal about the nuclear issue as their Iranian counterparts except when they periodically make use of public speeches and statements to send their rebuttal signals. That is to say, Israel has not been the aggressor in threatening Iran but has taken the time to respond to Iranian threats or rhetoric in regards to Israel. At times, these signals have been direct or indirect as was the case when Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was quoted as saying in April 2006, concerning the security of Israel: "We need to make sure no one has the capability or the power to commit destruction against us." What this statement suggests is that it is an indirect warning of possible Israeli military action against Iran.<sup>41</sup>

One plausible explanation for the almost complete lack of political rhetoric voiced from Israel for the early part of 2006 was that the Israeli government was simply taking a more moderate line before the upcoming elections. Politically speaking, it was an uncertain time as Ariel Sharon was sick and the focus was shifted for the time being. However, later on in the early spring of 2006, Olmert felt more secure as he sensed the international community was more or less aligned with Israel. This view was echoed by Israeli President Moshe Katsav: "I call on the Western world to not stand silently in the face of the nations that are trying to acquire nuclear weapons and [who] preach the

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<sup>40</sup> Aluf Benn. "IAF chief to head Iranian command," Haaretz.com, (August 27, 2006). <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/754702.html> (accessed September 9, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> "Olmert: Israel able to defend itself," Aljazeera.net, April 26, 2006, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/179AF574-21DA-4E89-B748-79F2795D94BB.html> (accessed May 3, 2006).



destruction of the State of Israel,” during an annual address at the country’s major Holocaust museum and memorial, Yad Vashem.<sup>42</sup>

What’s more, in April 2006, Israel announced during the continuing war of words between Iran and Israel that it had launched a satellite that Israeli officials said would significantly enhance its ability to spy on Iran’s nuclear program.<sup>43</sup> Whether there is truth in the statement of increased capabilities is not as relevant as the implied message sent. Israel has repeatedly voiced its concerns over the Iranian program, and the launching of the satellite, followed by statements that it has done so, indicates once again disapproval and distrust of the Iranian program.

To express their dissatisfaction with the current course of action pursued by the Iranian regime, the Israelis have, at times, been very bold in their statements, but overall they have actually been more moderate, and rely on the United States and the EU-3 to shoulder the burden of showing disapproval of the Iranian actions. It is not a comfortable position for the Israelis to take a back seat to the efforts led by the Europeans and the Bush administration, as the Israelis quite frequently take up a position that they favor, regardless of allied or world opinion. However, as the United States is bogged down in military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, so too are the Israelis somewhat preoccupied with the dysfunctional conditions of the disputed territories, as well as the most recent hostilities in Lebanon, and thus having limited resources, have somewhat grudgingly taken a back seat to the efforts lead by the Europeans.

All this is not to say that they have not taken the initiative to send signals themselves to the Iranians. The Israelis have, on repeated occasions, announced that they view a nuclear-armed Iran as unacceptable. The Israelis consistently voice their displeasure with what they perceive as the Iranian regime’s true desires, as does the

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<sup>42</sup> Ilene R. Prusher, staff writer of *The Christian Science Monitor* “Israel raises profile in Iran fray; Israeli satellite will monitor Iran’s nuclear program, which faces a UN deadline Friday: [All Edition].” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 28, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed May 3, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> “Israeli satellite ‘to spy on Iran,’” *BBCNews.com* April 25, 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle\\_east/4945048.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/4945048.stm) (accessed May 3, 2006).

United States, while they call for international pressure to end the stalemate. Through calculated use of the media, Israel is attempting to get the message across that they are not alone in opposing Iran's goals and have been quite clever in their use of the media. But is all this enough to influence the Iranians to halt their enrichment process or their nuclear program, for that matter?

#### **D. ISRAELI COMMENTS AND STATEMENTS**

In November of 2003, it was reported in the Israeli media that then Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told US officials that "under no circumstances would Israel be able to abide by nuclear weapons in Iranian possession."<sup>44</sup> In December of 2005, this position was reiterated by Israeli Prime Minister Sharon when he said: "Israel — and not only Israel — cannot accept a nuclear Iran... We have the ability to deal with this and we're making all the necessary preparations to be ready for such a situation."<sup>45</sup> As a consequence, the IDF was ordered by Ariel Sharon, then prime minister, to be ready by the end of March 2006 for possible military strikes on multiple uranium enrichment sites in Iran.<sup>46</sup> This position of suspicion and high concern from the Israeli perspective obviously has not changed, as even Sharon's successor Ehud Olmert has gone on record declaring Iran's obsessive hatred for Israel and to demand that it be stopped from developing nuclear weapons.<sup>47</sup>

The message changed in late December of 2005 when the Israeli Defense Minister Chief of Staff said that he didn't think that a military intervention against Iran's nuclear installations would be necessary in the near future, because until there are actual nuclear

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<sup>44</sup> Nicole Gaouette, "Israel: Iran is now danger No. 1; US, Britain, France, and Germany threatened Iran on Monday with sanctions over its nuclear program," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 28, 2003, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 3, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Uzi Mahnaimi and Sarah Baxter, "Israel readies forces for strike on nuclear Iran" *Times on line*, December 11, 2005, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-1920074,00.html> (accessed September 7, 2006)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> "VOA NEWS: Israel-Iran Must be Stopped from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons," US Fed News Service, Including US State News, February 15, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

weapons involved, there is no immediate threat to the existence of Israel.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps this is due to the political sensitivities of such a move amongst the Arabs or they realize that Israeli military action, short of multiple nuclear strikes, would be futile in the overall picture of the Iranian program, since by now, all the key sites are either hidden deep underground, or are so numerous throughout Iran, that a strike would do nothing more than confirm their ideology that Israel is a true enemy of Islam.

Although there has yet to be concrete evidence that the Iranians are guilty of nuclear weapons technologies, the Israelis are not taking the potential threat lightly. There is enough doubt and suspicion from Tel Aviv, combined with the anti-Semitic Iranian regime rhetoric, for Israel to have a vested interest in the situation. In fact, Israeli defense sources have said that the rising challenge coming from Tehran and Damascus are now at the top of the Israeli defense agenda, higher than the Palestinian issue.<sup>49</sup> Former and potentially future Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a recent speech at the Hudson Institute, made the logical implication that while Iran is focused on “Little Satan” then the next country on the Iranian’s list would be the “Great Satan,” which is more commonly referred to as the United States.<sup>50</sup>

## **E. IMPACT: EFFECTS ON INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLITICS**

The incessant pursuit of nuclear technologies and the inflammatory rhetoric emanating from Tehran toward Israel has had a reactionary effect on the Israeli political scene. Politicians ranging from then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Shimon Peres, and Benjamin Netanyahu, to current leader Ehud Olmert have all publicly voiced their deep concerns over the Iranian nuclear issue with a differing degree of severity on how best to respond to the rising Iranian threat. The overwhelming majority of the Israeli

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<sup>48</sup> “Israel rules out strike on Iran for now,” Aljazeera.net, December 29, 2005, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/A6C07283-4948-4F6F-9962-C2738298A348.html> (accessed May 3, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> Uzi Mahnaimi Aviv and Sarah Baxter, “Israel plans for war with Iran and Syria,” *The Sunday Times*, September 3, 2006 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-340486,00.html> (accessed September 9, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Freedman, “U.S. Politicians Should Focus On Tehran, Netanyahu Says,” *The Sun*, New York. <http://www.nysun.com/pf.php?id=39275> (accessed September 9, 2006).

government leadership is in agreement that Iran must be stopped from obtaining nuclear weapons, but the method that the Israelis think would work best differs among various members of the government ranging from military strikes to stressing the role of international diplomacy and the potential use of United Nations Security Council resolutions involving sanctions.<sup>51</sup>

## **1. Israeli Political Climate**

Inside Israel there is the ever-present problem between Israel and the Palestinians, which clouds most all of the daily policy issues that face the Jewish state. All of the lands that are considered occupied by the Israelis are not officially part of Israel, and while moderate Israelis want an end to the occupation of the disputed territories, there are Israelis who are more extreme in their view and think that the occupation should not change and, if anything, they should annex the land once and for all. The internal political problems are further complicated by several UN resolutions that denounce the Israeli occupation, yet in the end, the international community tends to look the other way and essentially ignore the stipulations of those resolutions. The double standard that the international community has here is noteworthy in that this silent approval of the majority of the West fuels much of the animosity against Israel in the Middle East and undoubtedly the present Iranian regime.

At the heart of the problem between the Israelis and the Islamic world is a fundamental difference in religious ideology and ownership of land. Christians, Jews, and Muslims all consider Palestine to be “their” Holy Land. In fact, there are several sites in Jerusalem that both Jews and Muslims claim as their own. However, religious ideology, common sense, or common purposes do not at times mix well together, so in that regard, there is no making either side happy regarding who should take ownership of the Holy City and, as such, the Iranians have cleverly taken advantage of this situation by supporting various Israeli opposition groups. There may never be a true lasting peace in the area because parties on both sides of the issue (Jew and Muslim) want to possess the

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<sup>51</sup> “Israel urges world action against Iran nuclear bid,” Reuters Foundation, February 14, 2006, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L14345796.htm> (accessed February 21, 2006).

same piece of land. They each want it because it legally and spiritually belongs to them having been promised to them by their God. Few arguments can be objectively made in reference to religion and as such, this classic dilemma paints the background for all political relations inside and outside of Israel.

In January of 2006, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon fell into a coma and was subsequently replaced by Ehud Olmert. Israel lost a leader that had gained a considerable reputation with both Israelis and Palestinians as a capable negotiator and man of force when necessary. This, perhaps, may be one explanation why Israel was relatively quiet throughout the first few months of 2006 concerning the nuclear stand off with Iran. Olmert likely needed to gain political support from both his political party and the Israeli populace. The recent conflict in Lebanon has proven that Olmert has the proclivity to make tough decisions, yet it remains uncertain whether he will be able to withstand the political pressure caused by continuous conflicts with Hamas in the south and Hezbollah in the north combined with the Iranian threat. As of late August 2006, according to a Yedioth Ahronoth poll, only 29 percent of the Israeli population feels that Olmert is fit to lead the country.<sup>52</sup> To make matters worse, while Olmert is dealing with those two monumental problems, he must contend with the existential threat emanating from Tehran.

## **2. Israeli Public View**

Without question, the general Israeli public does not welcome the inflammatory statements by President Ahmadinejad's call for the annihilation of Israel. The reprehensible statements coming from Tehran may be just pure rhetoric, but to the people of Israel, they have no choice but to see them as a threat and encourage their government to take action to ensure their security. In Israel, statements like "the Holocaust never happened" serve no more than to galvanize an already hardened people and give them more credibility in the region.

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<sup>52</sup> "Poll: majority wants Olmert out," Ynetnews.com, August 25, 2006, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3295576,00.html> (accessed September 19, 2006).

Throughout Israel, one will find varying opinions on whether to strike Iran's nuclear sites before it is "too late." Though Ahmadinejad's comments are brutal, they must be for diplomatic sake, kept in perspective. Fortunately, there are those in Israel such as Professor Yossi Yona, who believe that Israel needs to take a step back and examine the situation and the associated rhetoric before it becomes an axiom. Yona argues that those seeking to attack Iran need to take a look at lessons from the most recent war in Lebanon, which point to a lack of clear objectives and planning for what to do the day after the war. What Yona is suggesting is that all those who seek an effective military or other solution, have to have a plan for the following day, and right now the criticism is that there is not a follow-on plan. Yona also points out the notion that perhaps the Israeli leadership should also redo their thought process and accept the inevitability of another nuclear power in the Middle East.<sup>53</sup>

Recent Israeli public opinion polls have shown significant erosion in the Israeli popular support of the Olmert government following the most recent war against Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon. In a poll conducted by well-known pollster Prof. Yitzhak Katz of Maagar Mohot Survey Institute, it was discovered that of the 1,032 Jewish Israelis surveyed, an overwhelming majority of Israelis are now aware of both the inefficiency of the current administration as well as the danger created by years of appeasement. Seventy-three percent of the participants responded that they feel the results of the war increased the danger of a more serious conflict in the future, while 60 percent agreed with the statement: "Israel's enemies aren't interested in peace."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Yossi Yona, "Before we bomb Iran, Israel should consider other options aside from hitting nuke sites," YNETNews.com, September 17, 2006, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3304746,00.html> (accessed September 20, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> Sara Lehman, "A Heartening Hardening of Israeli Public Opinion," Jewishpress.com, September 6, 2006, [http://www.jewishpress.com/page.do/19355/A\\_Heartening\\_Hardening\\_Of\\_Israeli\\_Public\\_Opinion.html](http://www.jewishpress.com/page.do/19355/A_Heartening_Hardening_Of_Israeli_Public_Opinion.html) (accessed September 19, 2006).

## **F. ANALYSIS: WHAT WENT WRONG AND WHY?**

To Israelis like Shimon Peres, atomic weapons secured Israel's security and delivered nationhood regardless of the weapons the Arabs had developed.<sup>55</sup> Yet having a nuclear device in the modern world has only so much deterrent and "compellent" value. If having a nuclear weapon were the ultimate coercive diplomatic tool, then there would not be a need for regular standing armies as a strategic threat. If in fact the nuclear device was a true deterrent, then neither the 1967 or 1973 wars in the Middle East would have occurred, nor would Saddam Hussein have launched scuds at Tel Aviv. Thus far, possessing nuclear weapons has not completely stopped armies from going to battle or caused the Iranian nuclear program to slow down.

Of course, nuclear weapons can provide a certain level of security. Consequently, it could be argued that the ambiguous or implied possession of nuclear weapons by the Israelis is one reason why Saddam Hussein did not launch chemically armed scuds at Israel during the Gulf War of 1991. It is possible he knew that Israel was prepared to use nuclear weapons on Iraq if he launched poison gas scuds<sup>56</sup> at Israel, but there is no clear evidence to support such an assertion. The implications of this inaction may suggest that Iran chooses not to confront Israel directly, but through agents such as Hezbollah, in an effort to occupy Israel's limited resources while buying critical time to proceed with its own nuclear program.

While Israel is the recipient of callous rhetoric from Tehran, it does not appear to be the main driving force behind the Iranian nuclear program. What is a more likely scenario is that Israel is a convenient outlet and target for anti-Semitic rhetoric, which Iran no doubt thinks it can use to deflect attention away from its nuclear program and perhaps garner support from Arab and other nations. Israel's existence, while repulsive to the current Iranian regime, does not define all of what Iran represents. Therefore, what is really driving this line of rhetoric is more likely Shi'a based ideology and the current

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<sup>55</sup> Burrows and Windrem, *Critical Mass. The Dangerous Race for Superweapons in a Fragmenting World*, 280.

<sup>56</sup> Burrows and Windrem, 282.

Iranian regime's desire for respect as a regional power. These concepts, combined with the perceived threat caused by the United States' bordering presence in both Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the strong U.S. naval presence in the Arabian Gulf, are more likely to be causal factors influencing Iran's undeclared nuclear ambitions.

## **G. CONCLUSIONS**

Israel's intention is to protect its citizens from the continuous and daily onslaught from its enemies, as well as to deter Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Few existing nations have had to endure the continuous onslaught of aggressions in the same manner as the Israelis from both within its borders and from external sources. This fact, coupled with constant Arab and Muslim resentment, is fueled by accusations of the invalid nature of the Israeli state and the land it occupies. As a consequence, Israel takes all threats to its security seriously and while the world generally does not approve of all the methods it chooses when pursuing its goals and objectives, it is committed to maintaining both its security and its prosperity.

Israel's nuclear ambiguity effectiveness in preventing hostilities, both high and low intensity is questionable. There are the examples of the 1967 and 1973 wars that lay credence to the notion that having nuclear weapons only serves to prevent other nuclear powers from attacking in kind. It most certainly has not alleviated terrorist or other subversive activities in the Levant, nor has it prevented or deterred Iran from continuing its nuclear program moving forward.

For the time being, Iran has the upper hand in the bargaining process over its nuclear program and is astutely aware of this position. The reason for this assessment is based on a number of factors ranging from the physical aspects of the locations of Iran's various nuclear facilities to the apparent inability of the EU-3 and other interested parties, such as China and Russia, to come to an agreement on how best to influence the Iranian regime. Israel is undoubtedly aware of this and is either patiently awaiting the Western powers to agree on how to solve this crisis, secretly willing to accept a nuclear Iran and hedging the strength of its nuclear arsenal to deter Iran from striking Israel, or brokering



some behind-the-scenes deal that is yet to be revealed. What is unlikely is an Israeli military strike, which is physically and politically too risky a move to be successfully carried out.

Israel has made attempts to appeal to the Arab world to help reign in their fellow Muslims in Iran. The leadership of Tel Aviv also realizes that they have limited resources and that their political capital on the international scene is not as strong due to the ongoing struggles with the Palestinians. As a consequence, Israel knows that it cannot approach the issue with Iran alone and has turned to the United States and the international community for support.

At the end of the first half of 2006 has anything really changed? Assuming that the Iranians wish to intimidate and put coercive pressure on the Israelis, the answer is no. Also, assuming the Israeli's wish to pressure the Iranians into curbing their nuclear aspiration, the answer is no. According to concepts presented by Schelling, since Israel is a superior military power, it should have a more compelling negotiating position. Yet, there is no evidence that suggests a change in the Iranian position in its quest for the nuclear gold, which is perhaps due to the perceived safe position that the Iranians must feel due to the distance between the two nations and the limits of Israeli Defense Forces.

Yet in the end, Iran is still pressing onward with its rights to pursue nuclear technologies even under the threat of "possible" Israeli military action or impending international sanctions. Therefore, the impression one can derive under Schelling's view, is that the limits or abilities of an opposing nation's perceived military effectiveness are directly related to the ability or inability to cause another nation harm. That is to say, since Israel lacks the "bite" to match its "bark," Iran can keep pressing on with its program as there is no one essentially able to stop them.

There is no shortage of statements from Tel Aviv that would suggest anything other than utter disapproval for the Iranian nuclear program. The Iranians have made threats to the Israelis, and the Israelis have responded with counter threats and reminders of the possibilities of Iranian annihilation. The perception that the Israelis have of the Iranian threat is fairly clear and accurate from their perspective as the public statements

have so indicated with out much disillusion. However, the exact level and nature of the verbal threats is questionable. This is due to the dual use of making external threats seemingly directed at adversaries in order to increase feelings of nationalism and unify political support for the current regime.

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### **III. UNITED STATES DILEMMA**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

From the American perspective, a nuclear armed Iran is considered a destabilizing influence to the Middle East, if not the world. While it is not 100 percent clear that the Iranians are seeking nuclear weapons technologies, the closely related nuclear know-how involved in peaceful uses of nuclear energy is readily transferable to a nuclear weapons program, given enough time and the proper conditions. The United States, for its part in the global political structure, is determined not to allow a nuclear-armed Iran, and on numerous occasions, has plainly stated that a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable.

In that vein, the United States has been very outspoken and very direct in its communications with the world on what it is willing to accept and what it is not willing to accept in regards to the Iranian nuclear program. As it is widely known, the 1979 Iranian revolution saw an end to peaceful diplomatic ties between Washington and Tehran. As a consequence, there have been no direct relations between the two nations, complicating the signaling process. The result has been years of animosity and distrust, which clouds any objectivity over the nuclear, or any other international issue, that the two nations may be involved in.

The suspicion surrounding the Iranian nuclear program stems from years of disinformation and a lack of faithful cooperation with the IAEA, contrary to the Iranian claims that they have fully cooperated with the international community. In the summer of 2006, Iran barred an inspector who had previously been critical of the Iranian nuclear program; by doing so Iran made the verification process less reliable and the IAEA and international community more suspicious of Iranian motives.<sup>57</sup> Be that as it may, the Iranians have been asked to end their enrichment program that, until an amicable solution is agreed upon by the international community, would eliminate the common fear of

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<sup>57</sup> "Iran Bars Visits by U.N. Nuclear Inspector Critical of Its Government." *New York Times*, July 10, 2006, Late Edition (east Coast), <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

Iranian nuclear proliferation and weapons technologies. Regrettably, to date, Iran has failed to suspend their nuclear research and has continued to defy the international community.

## **B. UNITED STATES INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES**

One of the main concerns in having a nuclear weapon at the disposal of Tehran is that it could potentially cause Iran to be more brazen with its suspected terrorist activities. The fear is that they would recognize and exploit the deterrence value of a nuclear weapon, and if they were accused of terrorist activities, their enemies would think twice about retaliating. Also, having the current Iranian regime gain access to nuclear weapons technologies causes two possible nightmarish scenarios. The first is that Iran could essentially hand a nuclear device over to a terrorist organization. By doing so it would then be more difficult to determine the weapon's origin and make it nearly impossible for the U.S. to reciprocate in kind, practically negating the deterrent value of the United States nuclear arsenal. The second is that it is widely viewed that the Shi'a version of Islam, practiced by the extremist leaders in Iran, makes martyrdom desirable and thus could easily render deterrence meaningless.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout the current crisis, the U.S. has varied its approach while attempting to influence Iran's leadership to eliminate or curb its nuclear program. The majority of the signals from the U.S. have been firm and mostly confrontational with Iran in that the U.S. repeatedly condemns Iran's actions and stresses that it is backed by the international community. In that vein, the message from the Bush administration is that while the U.S. leads the charge against Iran, it does not do so alone and has support from its European and other allies.

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<sup>58</sup> Mark Sappenfield, Staff writer of *The Christian Science Monitor* "Behind Bush's hard line on Iran; After 9/11, the administration may see the US as the only one prepared to take action :[All Edition]." *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 14, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

## **1. U.S. State of Mind**

There is no communication between the U.S. and Iran, for doing so would not only break a diplomatic taboo, but would come into conflict with the U.S. position of not negotiating with terrorists or their supporters. The Bush administration is suspicious of Iran's nuclear program because it was essentially kept a secret from the international community for eighteen years. It is also suspicious of the Iranian regime because, in the U.S. view, Iran is seeking the ultimate weapon of mass destruction and feels it cannot trust Iran who has ties with known terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah.

In fact, while signing the "Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996," President Clinton identified Libya and Iran as two of the world's strongest supporters of terrorism.<sup>59</sup> The U.S. supports all signatory states of the NPT who wish to pursue nuclear power for peaceful purposes. However, the difference in the case of Iran is that they have continuously been playing a game of cat and mouse with IAEA inspectors and the regime has made threatening remarks to other sovereign nations such as Israel.

Since September 11, 2001, the U.S. has been in an increased state of awareness to threats and perceived threats and has re-evaluated the strategies it uses to defend itself. Approximately one year after the tragic events of that day, a new National Security Strategy was issued that included a policy, "Preemption,"<sup>60</sup> with an emphasis on preemptive and preventive uses of force as a direct result and as a response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, as published in 2002:

The United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression. Yet

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<sup>59</sup> President Clinton, "Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996." U.S. Department of State Dispatch, August 5, 1996, 402. <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 8, 2006).

<sup>60</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon, Susan E. Rice, and James B. Steinberg "The New National Security Strategy and Preemption" Brookings Institution, December 2002 <http://www.brook.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb113.htm> (accessed March 15, 2006).

in an age where the enemies of civilization openly and actively seek the world's most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather.<sup>61</sup>

This policy is not well received by some, but nevertheless, is a policy that the U.S. has embraced and is currently putting to the test in Iraq and elsewhere. Due to the nature of the policy, it is clear how influential it is with the current situation between Iran and the international community as it sets the stage for possible actions in a variety of places and situations.

It seems almost a cliché to blame the frigid relations between the United States and Iran on the United States as it is far easier to place the blame on the larger power since, by virtue of its powerful position, it is often viewed as the oppressor in negotiations. However, the reality of this particular case is quite different. Shortly after the Iranian revolution, the U.S. was willing to reestablish diplomatic relations, and on November 1, 1979, Iranian foreign minister Ibrahim Yazdi met with Zbigniew Brzezinski, then President Carter's national security advisor, to discuss the resumption of relations.<sup>62</sup> Three days later, in reaction to this meeting, Iranian students attacked the U.S. embassy in Tehran, and took fifty-two diplomats hostage, which was quickly approved of the next day by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.<sup>63</sup> This event marked a key moment in the subsequent sour relations between the two nations, which has lasted for twenty seven years now. It solidified a hardening position chosen by the Iranian regime as it was used then and now to galvanize the Iranian nation against the U.S.

Within both political parties of the U.S. there is talk of military action to take out the Iranian nuclear sites. Yet in its global war on terror, the U.S. finds itself in a potentially dangerous juggling act in the international community with ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as continually facing the perplexing problem

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<sup>61</sup> The White House, National Security Strategy of The United States of America., <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf#search=%22origins%20of%20U.S.%20Preemption%20strategy%22> (accessed March 15, 2006).

<sup>62</sup> Michael Rubin, "Can Iran Be Trusted?" Articles AEI Online, September 1, 2006. [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24854,filter.all/pub\\_detail.asp/](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24854,filter.all/pub_detail.asp/) (accessed September 9, 2006).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

of securing its own borders. Therefore, realizing that it is taxing its resources and political capital at home and abroad, the United States desires a united coalition in the efforts to deter Iran from pursuing its nuclear ambitions unchecked. Former speaker of the house Newt Gingrich sums up the argument opposing direct assaults on Iran with the following:

I think if this regime [in Iran] is so dangerous that we can't afford to let them have nuclear weapons, we need a strategy to replace the regime. And the first place you start is where Ronald Reagan did in Eastern Europe with a comprehensive strategy that relied on economic, political, diplomatic, information and intelligence.<sup>64</sup>

### **C. U.S. BARGAINING STRATEGIES PURSUED**

Throughout 2006, the U.S. has maintained an interesting mix of signaling strategies with Iran. On multiple occasions, the president and his spokesmen could be heard stressing diplomacy as the best course of action. At other times, this same group can be heard using coercive and near threatening rhetoric mixed with verbiage that stresses diplomacy and unity of allied opposition, strategies such as “carrots and sticks” vis-à-vis UN Security Council actions and proposals for lifting of sanctions, supplying aircraft parts, and other economic and political incentives.

In a November 2005 statement, R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, pointed out that the United States officially communicates with the Iranian regime through the Swiss government. In the past, the U.S. has engaged the Iranians when it was essentially convenient and in line with U.S. interests. While there are no direct links between the Bush administration and Iran, they began taking advantage of the World Wide Web back in May of 2003 when funding and operations were approved for a Persian-language Web site that essentially provides a back channel for official U.S. statements in Farsi. The intent of the Web site and other channels is to communicate

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<sup>64</sup> Ralph Z. Hallow, “Gingrich opposed to U.S. strike on Iran” *The Washington Times*, September 1, 2006 <http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060901-120603-6166r.html/> (accessed September 9, 2006).



through public statements, television, radio, and Internet, in Farsi, that the U.S. intends to continue to engage those Iranians who are pressing for change.<sup>65</sup>

In an interview with a U.S. based channel CBS, President Bush said, “The Free World cannot allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon, not just the United States, but those of us who value freedom, and that is why our strategy is to present and hold together a united front to say to the Iranians your designs to have a nuclear weapon or your desire to have the capability of making a nuclear weapon is unacceptable.”<sup>66</sup> VP Cheney applauded the IAEA’s report to the UNSC as “the right step.” He too reiterates that the United States was pursuing diplomacy to resolve the impasse over Tehran’s nuclear ambitions but said that no policy options, including military strikes, were off the table.<sup>67</sup>

In June 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States would join the European talks with Iran over its nuclear program, but only if Tehran first ended its uranium activities, which was a change from decades of refusing to engage in direct talks with Iran.<sup>68</sup> While it is unclear why such a move to thaw relations and open up dialogue occurred after nearly three decades of isolation, the reaction from Iran was nothing short of defiant. However, after making that demand, the three months that followed saw a deliberate low-key reaction from the U.S. and its allies.<sup>69</sup> The U.S. and European diplomats say that this strategy was designed to make the West appear patient about dealing with the issue.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs “U.S. Policy Toward Iran.” Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies Washington, DC (November 30, 2005). <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2005/57473.htm/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> “Bush says Free World cannot allow nuclear-armed Iran” *Iran Focus*, January 28, 2006, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=5519/> (accessed September 12, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> “Cheney says Iran nuclear situation “dangerous” *Iran Focus* (Reuters), February 7, 2006 <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=5686/> (accessed September 12, 2006).

<sup>68</sup> Steven R. Weisman, Warren Hoge contributed reporting from the United Nations for this article, and David E. Sanger from Washington. “U.S. Makes Offer to Meet Iranians on Nuclear Plan.” *New York Times*, June 1, 2006, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed June 14, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> Helene Cooper, “In Muted Response to Iran, U.S. and Allies Seek Edge.” *New York Times*, August 25, 2006, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 9, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

In August of 2006, the U.S. announced that it may start naming banking institutions that it believed was assisting Iran in financing illicit activities such as weapons proliferation and terrorism.<sup>71</sup> The intention of the warning was to dry up the funding from what the U.S. deems is one of the largest sponsors of Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations, and to financially isolate the Iranian regime. The message being sent to the banking industry is such that their business reputation is on the line if it chooses to do business with the Iranian regime and it runs the risk of having its name and reputation damaged by such an association. The signal being sent to the Iranian regime is not as direct as sanctions, but does strongly suggest U.S. disapproval of Iranian activities.

In a more direct strategy that sends a stronger signal to Iran, the Bush administration also indicated in August of 2006, that they were prepared to form an independent coalition to restrict Iranian trade and freeze assets.<sup>72</sup> The strategy reflects both long-standing U.S. frustrations with the Security Council's ability to take action on Iran, and the perceived weakness of Washington's position due to its controversial role in a series of past conflicts in the Middle East, such as the most recent ones in Lebanon.<sup>73</sup>

### **1. The Implied Gaddafi Role Model**

While not directly addressing Iran, a series of events deemed successful in maintaining world peace and stability has been insinuated as an example for Iran to follow. Late in 2004, Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi announced that Tripoli would give up its nuclear and chemical weapons programs paving the way for the lifting of sanctions and normalizing relations with the U.S.<sup>74</sup> Since that time, the U.S. has

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<sup>71</sup> Mark Felsenthal, "U.S. warns banks of stigma of Iran, N. Korea links" Reuters Washington, D.C. (August 23, 2006). [http://today.reuters.com/news/articlenews.aspx?type=topNews&storyid=2006-08-24T005239Z\\_01\\_N23360595\\_RTRUKOT\\_0\\_TEXT0.xml/](http://today.reuters.com/news/articlenews.aspx?type=topNews&storyid=2006-08-24T005239Z_01_N23360595_RTRUKOT_0_TEXT0.xml/) (accessed September 9, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Maggie Farley, "U.S. May Curb Iran; If the U.N. Security Council won't penalize Tehran for its nuclear program, the White House may forge an alliance to do so: [Home Edition]." *Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 9, 2006).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Paul Kerr, "News ANALYSIS: Libya's Disarmament: A Model for U.S. Policy?" *Arms Control Today* 34, no. 5 (June 1, 2004): 36-38. <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed September 7, 2006).

repeatedly said that they would like to see countries such as Iran, North Korea, and Syria emulate Libya's behavior to end its pursuit of WMD as it hindered both their security and economic development.<sup>75</sup>

The U.S. wasted little time in using the apparent influential success of sanctions when the opportunity arose. In a statement read before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in November 2005 that specifically addressed U.S. policy toward Iran, R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, discussed the benefits gained by Libya, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Ukraine and Kazakhstan when they dropped their respective nuclear weapons programs. Burns pointed out that all the before mentioned countries benefited from the trust they earned in the world by virtue of increased investments, expanded roles in regional leadership, improvements to their long term security, and the overall enhancement of international ties.<sup>76</sup>

## **2. One Small Yet Firm Condition**

In June of 2006, the United States made an overture to Iran in the form of an incentive package. The offer included nuclear technologies and contracts for aging civilian aircraft parts as well as support to join the World Trade Organization. Of course, all of this hinged on the Iranians agreeing to suspend enrichment of uranium, which the Bush administration has demanded for quite some time. The proposal came after the Bush administration changed strategy on Iran by conceding to enter into direct talks with Iran under certain conditions. The proposal also had a downside for Iran if they chose to continue on their current path. If Iran didn't agree to suspend those activities, the package included "disincentives," as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had described

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<sup>75</sup> Kerr, "News ANALYSIS: Libya's Disarmament: A Model for U.S. Policy?"

<sup>76</sup> R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs "U.S. Policy Toward Iran." Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies Washington, DC (November 30, 2005). <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2005/57473.htm/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

in the past. These were to include travel restrictions on Iran's religious leaders and government officials involved in the nuclear program, and an economic freeze of Iranian financial assets abroad.<sup>77</sup>

### **3. The Message**

As mentioned earlier, there are several mediums used in conducting signaling. The Internet has become one of the more readily accessible formats for analyst and layperson alike as various national and international news agencies have supplemented their newspaper, radio, and television outlets with Web sites. Between January and August of 2006, 153 Web articles relating to the U.S. stance on the Iranian crisis were sampled and categorized by overall content as to the intended message the U.S. was sending to the Iranians. Table 1 reflects the survey results of various national and international articles with a large majority of the signals sent from the United States being either confrontational or firm over the U.S. position on the Iranian nuclear issue.

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<sup>77</sup> Helene Cooper, "U.S. Is Offering Deals on Trade To Entice Iran." *New York Times*, June 6, 2006, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

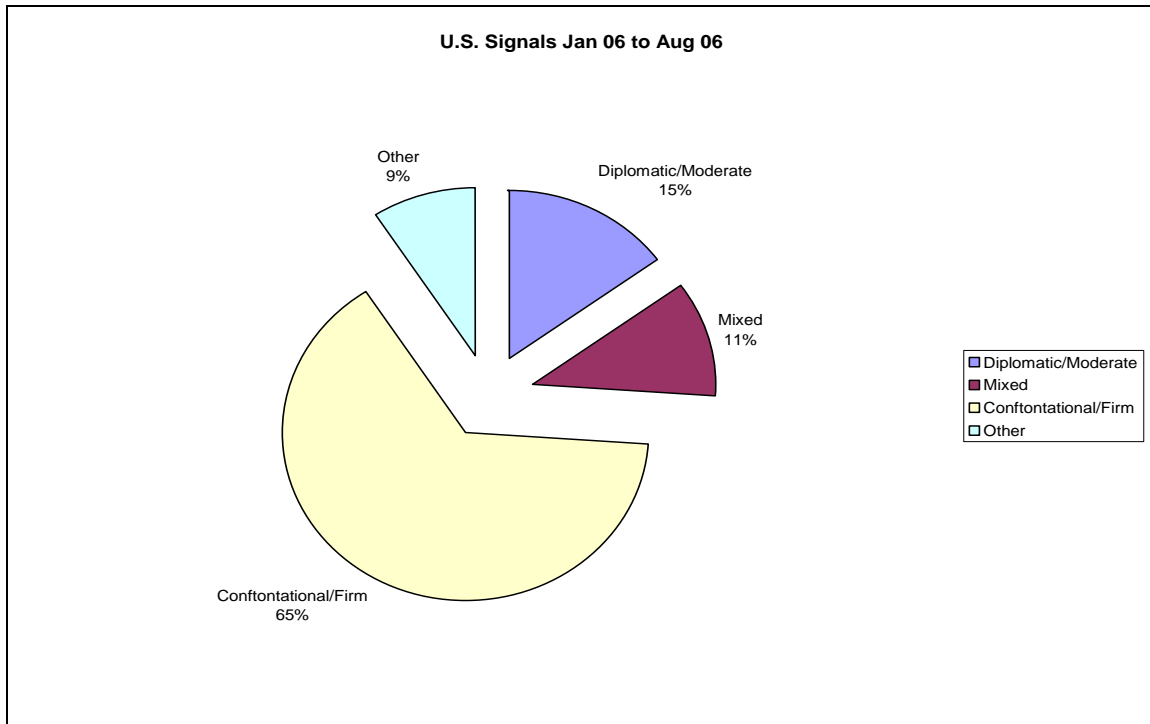


Table 1. Survey of 153 Web articles in 2006.

#### **D. U.S. PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

The United States has been very explicit in its demands of Iran in order to maintain what it feels is in the best interests of its national security. While the president and his administration have repeatedly stressed diplomacy and unity of commitment from its allies, it has remained firm in its position regarding the Iranian regime. In one of the more widely referenced speeches by President Bush, he set the tone for the manner in which his administration views its foreign policy in regards to Iran in his now famous “Axis of Evil” speech:

Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people’s hope for freedom. ...States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could

attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

— George W. Bush, 2002 State of the Union Address<sup>78</sup>

While there are those who would argue that such a statement is arrogant and condescending, one thing is clear, that the United States continually stresses its view that Iran is a threat to world stability and its possession of nuclear weapons is intolerable.

Early in 2006, President Bush stated his displeasure with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's alarming remarks about Israel and its challenging past. Bush went on to say that the U.S. is a firm ally of Israel and would come to her defense if required. When asked if he meant militarily, Bush said, "You bet, we'll defend Israel." While the United States has no military alliance with Israel, the relationship between the two nations is unique, being primarily backed by aid packages and military hardware sales. Previous U.S. presidents have been ambiguous about the relationship between the two, however Bush has been more explicit than his predecessors in describing the nature of the relationship.<sup>79</sup>

As mentioned above, the U.S. has for decades been a strong supporter and ally of Israel. As an ally, it has committed to render military and economic aide to the relatively small state and has made note of the threats Iran has made to Israel and has responded. Following the latest hostilities between Israel and Iranian-backed Hezbollah fighters, President Bush had the following to say: "Iran has made clear that it seeks the destruction of Israel. We can only imagine how much more dangerous this conflict would be if Iran had the nuclear weapon it seeks."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> George W. Bush, "The President's State of the Union Address" The United States Capitol Washington, D.C. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html/> (accessed June 14, 2006).

<sup>79</sup> Glenn Kessler, "Bush Says U.S. Would Defend Israel Militarily: [Final Edition]." *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 10, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> "Remarks by President Bush on Foreign Policy," Office of the Press Secretary, Washington, DC. August 14, 2006. <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/70549.htm> (accessed September 10, 2006).

## **E. IMPACT: EFFECTS ON THE UNITED STATES**

While the United States is occupied with the War on Terror and involved in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the Bush administration has taken a strong interest in the Iranian crisis. And while there are nations that are critical of the role the U.S. plays in the world order, still many others look to the U.S. for leadership and security. Consequently, the credibility of the U.S. is being challenged and in danger of losing international clout due in part to the stagnating and continuing Iraqi saga, but also because of its inability to effectively influence the Iranian leadership over its pursuit of nuclear technologies. At home in the U.S. there are also differing levels about how best to solve this critical issue.

### **1. U.S. Political Climate**

The U.S. political system is relatively stable with the standard political party divisions that face most democracies. While there are both democrats and republicans who oppose Washington's foreign policies in relation to the recent developments in the Middle East, one of President Bush's main supporters on the war effort in Iraq and the Iran issue has been republican Senator John McCain. In a statement in January of 2006, McCain appears to rule out negotiations: "They're interested in acquiring weapons of mass destruction and dominating the Middle East," McCain, R-Arizona, told a panel, "I don't know of any carrot that works."<sup>81</sup> While there is division among the two major parties as to how the Bush administration is handling the crisis of the War on Terror, in the House of Representatives they are in relative agreement on condemning Iran for violating its nuclear non-proliferation obligations and have announced support for economic sanctions and for reporting Tehran to the United Nations Security Council.<sup>82</sup>

Since the discovery of the Iranian nuclear program, there has been increasing concern in U.S. political circles as to the intent of the Iranian program, which is fostered by Middle East analysts. Renowned Middle East expert Bernard Lewis, in a Wall Street

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<sup>81</sup> Edith M. Lederer, "U.N. chief asks U.S. to give Iran reactors" Associated Press, January 27, 2006, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=5507/12> (accessed September 12, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> "U.S. lawmakers rip Iran's nuclear activities" *Iran Focus*, February 16, 2006, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=5813> (accessed February 22, 2006).

Journal editorial, argued that the Iranian regime does not fear killing Palestinians in a nuclear attack on Israel nor do they fear an Israeli counter-attack on Iran because in either case, according to their faith, the Muslim dead will be automatically accepted by Allah directly into heaven.<sup>83</sup> The relevance of this view is that Lewis is well respected and admired by many Washington politicians and, as such, these diplomats will often align their thought processes to his. That is not to say that Lewis, and other Middle East experts are directly helping to form U.S. foreign policy, but rather they are an influential part of the process.

## **2. U.S. Public Views**

Since the Iranian revolution in 1979, the relations between the U.S. and Iran can be summed up in one word: cold. The taking of U.S. hostages at the Tehran embassy, the poor treatment of Iranian citizens, and the attacks that occurred during the Iran/Iraq war on neutral shipping have left most Americans with a less-than-nice picture of the Iranian regime.<sup>84</sup> Frequently, the news reports on Iranian human rights violations and the overall image of the regime is one of intolerance and totalitarianism. Because of these past events, combined with the continuing oppression of the Iranian regime on its people, the American public as a whole is against the Iranian regime's pursuit of nuclear technologies. In fact, a January 2006 Washington Post survey concluded that the majority of Americans view Iran as a threat and support the use of sanctions as a way to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.<sup>85</sup>

The U.S. public view of Iran and its people as a whole is tainted by a mixture of images of political oppression, radical elements, and fear. An unfortunate fact of life in the U.S. is that a great majority of its citizens form their views and opinions concerning

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<sup>83</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Does Iran have something in store?" Opinion Journal from *The Wall Street Journal* Editorial Page (August 8, 2006), <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110008768/> (accessed September 9, 2006).

<sup>84</sup> "Reacting With a Shrug: [Final Edition]." *The Washington Post* (pre-1997 Full text), July 21, 1988, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed September 8, 2006).

<sup>85</sup> Claudia Deane, "Most Americans Back Sanctions on Iran; Nuclear Program Seen as Threat in Polls : [Final Edition]." *The Washington Post*, January 31, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).



politics based on information they receive from the media. Each news source has its own unique slant on the news ranging from the left and swinging all the way to the right with a few more moderate in the middle. As a consequence of not doing their own research, most Americans form an opinion based on the analyst of their choice, and since good news rarely sells, the average citizen does not think much of the Iranian regime; rarely do the headlines ever read anything other than doom and gloom from Tehran.

Within each sector of U.S. society one can find vastly differing opinions on whether the Iranians should have access to nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. In that regard, most people fall into one of two camps: those opposed to any nuclear technologies and those who think it is the right of all people to benefit from the advantages of modern technologies. What is clear, however, among all U.S. citizens, is their desire to live in a safe and secure world. Most recognize the potential dangers of arming a radical regime, and to the more politically ignorant of the U.S. population, the thought of a nuclear weapon in Iran is a nightmarish condition. In an L.A. Times poll, also in January 2006, it was discovered that even though the overall public sentiment is against the war in Iraq, the majority of those polled favor military intervention if the Iranians pursue technologies that allow them to obtain a nuclear weapon.<sup>86</sup>

This sentiment changed just five months later when a poll (Table 2) was released by The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press which discovered that while most Americans believe Iran desires nuclear technology in order possess nuclear weapons, there is considerable public opposition to launching U.S. air strikes against military targets in Iran. The preferred course of action for most Americans is the use of multilateral sanctions as the best option for dealing with the current nuclear standoff. The survey also concluded that the U.S. public overwhelmingly wants the U.N., not the U.S., to take the helm in dealing with Tehran's nuclear program. The message to the

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<sup>86</sup> Greg Miller, "57% Back a Hit on Iran if Defiance Persists; The war has not diminished Americans' support for military action against Iraq's neighbor if nuclear pursuits aren't dropped : [Home Edition]." *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

Bush administration is clear; by greater than three-to-one (72%–21%), Americans endorse the U.N. conducting the lead role on this particular issue.<sup>87</sup>

<b>Iran Options: Multilateral Sanctions, Not U.S. Bombing</b>			
<i>Possible steps for dealing w/ Iran nuclear program...</i>	<b>Favor</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>DK/ Other</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
U.N. & leading nations imposing tough sanctions	64	25	11=100
Giving Iran nuclear energy if they stop program	46	46	8=100
Backing Iran opposition groups to overthrow govt.	37	48	15=100
U.S. bombing military targets in Iran	30	61	9=100

Table 2. Pew Research poll released May 16, 2006.<sup>88</sup>

## F. WHAT WENT WRONG AND WHY

Regardless of the pressure put on Iran by the United States and the Bush administration, the only apparent reaction out of the Iranians is an increase in the war of words and rhetoric and the apparent continuation of Iranian research efforts. By calling for a regime change, then stating publicly that \$75 million has been allocated for promoting the resistance and dissidence movement within Iran, the Bush administration has only served to strengthen the hardliners' position inside Iran. The Iranians have become more defiant and have apparently increased their resolve on the nuclear issue. Iran has not backed down nor showed any inclination to back down from what they view are their rights under the NPT. While there have been moments when the Iranians have sought to come to the table and negotiate, these overtures have more of an "appearance" of cooperation than any real merit.

<sup>87</sup> "Public Worried about Iran but Wary of Military Action," Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, May 16, 2006, <http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=1056> (accessed September 12, 2006).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

## **1. Carrots and Sticks**

In a June 2006 article in “Arms Control Today,” Paul Kerr examined Iranian leadership statements and came to the conclusion that the “carrot and stick” approach had an encouraging effect on the Iranians and was influential in some Iranian compromises.<sup>89</sup> While his assessment appears to have some validity by virtue of several Iranian compromises, the Iranians have yet to truly yield to international pressures and discontinue their nuclear activities. As of September 2006, they still continue to act in defiance of the IAEA and enrich uranium. While the Iranians are exposed to political and economic isolation, it is not total isolation, and thus not as effective had it been all-encompassing.

Therefore, in that regard the approach has failed. This failure is a direct reflection of the inability of the U.S. to forcefully influence the Iranian regime, in part because the U.S. is not viewed as having the political or coercive resources to prevent Iran from pursuing its goals, nor is it seen by Tehran as an immediate physical threat. As a result, what Iran gains by the apparent weak political and military position of the U.S. is valuable time to conduct further nuclear research, which they are undoubtedly taking advantage of, in order to at least gain nuclear familiarity.

## **2. Divide and Conquer**

President Bush, in July of 2006, said, “One thing is for certain, that if the Iranians see that the United States and Russia are working together on this issue, they’ll understand the seriousness of our intent.”<sup>90</sup> The key word in the president’s statement is “if.” Iranian officials are more intelligent than most give them credit for and realize that the strength of their opposition lies in agreement in the unity of effort. Being that the Iranians are gifted and crafty negotiators, they have been attempting to separate the Russians’ cooperation from the Americans’. A brief example of this manipulation can be

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<sup>89</sup> Paul Kerr, “Behind Iran’s Diplomatic Behavior,” *Arms Control Today* 36, no. 5 (June 1, 2006): 32-35. <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed September 7, 2006).

<sup>90</sup> “Bush says U.S., Russia united to stop Iran developing nukes,” *Iran Focus*, July 15, 2006. <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=7922> (accessed August 10, 2007).

seen in the recent military arms sales between Russia and Iran which clearly signal a conflict of interest as well as highlighting the economic shortcomings of the Russian position. Yet still, one less than apparent outcome from this whole process is that U.S. pressures to gain a unity of effort, and to halt the Iranian nuclear program seem, to have accelerated the Iranian effort to gain fungible nuclear knowledge and technologies prior to their being taken out by future military strikes.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

The United States has a keen interest in the case of Iran and its pursuit of nuclear technologies as this issue directly affects its national security posture. Presently, the United States supports diplomacy and international negotiations to resolve the issue, but reserves the right to all options, which strongly implies the use of military force if necessary. The signals from Washington have been predominantly in opposition to the Iranian stance. While the U.S. has acknowledged Iran's rights to nuclear technologies, it also acknowledges the inadequacies of the Iranian regime to be truthful in all aspects of its nuclear program.

As Iran continues to move forward with its nuclear program despite political threats and allegations by the West, the theories of compellance and coercion are, in a sense, indirectly validated by this particular case study for the following reason. There is no evidence to suggest that Iran feels truly threatened to the point of compliance with the U.S. and the demands of the West even if it does not change its behavior. The United States, in statements such as "all options are on the table" strongly hints at military action but falls short of actually saying that it will indeed attack. As a consequence, Iran combines this obscure gesture with a larger picture of U.S. involvement in other theaters, namely Iraq and Afghanistan, and comes to the conclusion that there is no immediate threat. Thus, the nuclear enrichment continues.

The image that the United States has of the Iranian political leadership, and its intentions is not positive, to say the least. The facts are clear that the two states do not agree on a multitude of issues nor are they willing to truly compromise on the key issues that are of concern to the greater international community. Clearly, the image that the

United States has of the Iranian regime has had an impact on the foreign policy it chooses in relation to Iran, in that the status quo since 1979 has been to support the Iranian people while simultaneously condemning the Iranian regime for defying the overall international consensus to halt the nuclear program.

Not having direct talks or direct relations with the Iranians is a ludicrous policy and serves only to hinder the diplomatic process. It is bad enough that the U.S. is essentially bullying the Iranians to see the error in their ways; they are sending the message through back channels and in veiled signals. The Iranians are no more innocent than the U.S. in this process, since they essentially and frequently mirror the same behavior. There is always the opportunity to look beyond the failings of past transgressions between nations and mend the wounds of history, yet for political reasons, neither party at this point truly wants to engage the other as equals in the international arena. In the end, the world will essentially become increasingly more insecure as a consequence of leaders who cannot contain their egos or absorb their pride.

## **IV. IRAN**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The history of Iran is both an intriguing and fascinating account of a proud and accomplished people. Few would question its role in history as a powerful and influential model for many civilizations, which until recent history has been a country to be emulated. Iran in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had the misfortune of being caught in a power struggle between two colonial powers: the British and the Russians. As a result of its strategic location and oil reserves, Iran became a valued prize to the British who embarked on a state building campaign there, most certainly not out of benevolence but for purely strategic reasons. This concept of outside interference is still relevant today in that Iran, like its foe Israel, has a “never again” type of mentality where the pains of the recent colonial past are not forgotten and are used to shape current and future policy.

For several years there has been continuing speculation on the possibilities of military operations by the U.S., its allies, or even Israeli forces if the Iranians indeed do proceed with nuclear weapons technologies.<sup>91</sup> Yet others argue that if Iran had an operating plant, it would be safer for them as a nation due to the fact that if there is plutonium present, it is less likely to be attacked by hostile, i.e., Western, forces because of humanitarian issues and the environmental repercussions of such a move. It is important to note that nuclear technologies, by their nature, are readily adaptable for dual-purpose use. That is to say that by gaining knowledge of peaceful uses of atomic energy, it is technologically easier to make the jump over to weapons-grade materials than if there were no nuclear power plants present. Therefore, in a perhaps calculated move, Iran is hastily marketing its desire for nuclear power under the guise of an “energy” issue, which has been the case in multiple public statements and newspaper articles worldwide.

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<sup>91</sup> “Cheney Says Israel Might ‘Act First’ on Iran” New York Times (NYC) Jan 21, 2005. <http://proquest.com/> (accessed September 4, 2006).

Under the Shah, Iran signed the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and established the plans to obtain nuclear power as a form of energy. Therefore, the historical foundation for this issue is pre-1979 and as such, it could be argued that the current regime has hijacked the issue in order to influence its citizens at home and in the rest of the free world abroad. Because of the precedence Iran has broken and those previously set by India and the Pakistanis, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the NPT is also at stake. Recently, in an attempt to thwart the idea of sanctions, the Iranian parliament threatened to pass legislation forcing it to quit the NPT.<sup>92</sup>

As late as August 2006, Iranian hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is quoted as saying: “Sanctions cannot dissuade the Iranian nation from achieving our lofty goals of progress. So it’s better for Europe to be independent in decision-making and to settle problems through negotiations.”<sup>93</sup> Can compellance or coercion as described by Schelling be effectively implemented to persuade the Iranians to yield to the commonly held world view of non-proliferation in the Middle East? Furthermore, if seen through the eyes of the Iranians, in what ways can the West be persuaded to see the merits of Iran’s stated nuclear goals?

## **B. IRANIAN INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES**

Not unlike most institutions, the Iranian regime desires to be respected as a regional leader as well as maintain its sovereignty. Like all nations, it desires to maintain security of the regime and to increase the success and prosperity of its people. The Iranians are aware of the means to achieve its national self interests, and as such, are consistently signaling to the world their rights as a nation to pursue those interests and the

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<sup>92</sup> Ali Akbar Dareini “Iran Threatens Pullout From Nuclear Treaty; U.S. Backs Push for Tehran to Stop Enrichment: [Final Edition].” *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

<sup>93</sup> George Jahn, “Iranian President: Sanctions Won’t Work Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Urges Europe Not to Adopt Sanctions, Saying They Won’t Dissuade Iran” Associated Press. August 30, 2006. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/print?id=2375472>, (accessed September 2, 2006).

repercussions of other nations who attempt to interfere with that right. Yet the extent of the true nature and validity of the signals sent from Tehran is something that remains to be determined.

The Iranian regime is so entrenched with the idea of nuclear technologies that it is forming new trade alliances with the likes of nuclear powers India and China. Both are growing nations with an insatiable thirst for fossil fuels. Iran, as of late, has been developing natural gas links with China and India, who notably have proved more sympathetic than the Europeans to Iran's nuclear program. Simple economics may well be one of the strongest underlying factors influencing this recent cooperation as noted in 2004, when Tehran signed a 30-year deal with China's Sinopec worth \$70 billion for liquefied natural gas (LNG).<sup>94</sup> Throughout the last two years there has been an increase in trade talks between Iran and several other Far East buyers, as well as Pakistan. The courting of China is most interesting in that, to date, they have been one of two countries, Russia being the other, who are strongly opposed to any kind of international sanctions on Iran. It is indeed a shrewd move by the Iranians to place United Nations Security Council members in direct opposition.

In April of 2006, M.A. Mohammadi, the press officer for the Iranian Mission to the United Nations stated that "Unlike Israel, which possesses nuclear weapons and has refused to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Islamic Republic of Iran has renounced nuclear weapons and has implemented the terms of its safeguard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, resulting in more than 1,700 days of inspections by the IAEA, which has found no evidence of the diversion of nuclear material to prohibited activities."<sup>95</sup> Such statements sound convincing, but if placed in proper context with more information, the reader will likely draw a different conclusion. Israel has yet to go on the offensive to threaten Iran. They have said they will not accept a nuclear-armed Iran, yet such statements, while seemingly inflammatory, are reactions to threats from

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<sup>94</sup> "Iran politics: Iran threatens economic backlash over IAEA vote." EIU ViewsWire September 27, 2005, n/a. <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

<sup>95</sup> "Iran's Nuclear Intentions: [Final Edition]." *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed June 8, 2006).



Iran. If Israel has indeed had nuclear weapons for as long as they (say they) have, they have yet to publicly threaten any power with these weapons.

Throughout the last two to three years, there has been no shortage of headlines referring to the irrational and rebellious regime in power in Iran. However, the truth is that the Iranians are not as irrational or unpredictable as most would think. They have to date, played a very clever political game both in Iraq and in its nuclear game of cat and mouse with the U.S., Europe, and the IAEA, which they appear to be winning.<sup>96</sup> The West, for its part, has consistently been firm in its stance and seeks to maintain the appearance of stability and control over this dilemma. As shall be seen, the Iranians have been very calculating in their approach to the issue.

Given the information publicly provided, it would appear that the Iranians are quite skilled at deception. As such, the ability to deceive and conceal leaves the opponent (the West) at a clear disadvantage. There is no shortage of public statements from Iran, as they often get on the airwaves to push their agenda internally and then justify to the world, when they want to, about what they are up to. The strategy in that regard is straightforward, however, as far as signaling to the world their intent, the conclusion is what follows next.

### **C. BARGAINING STRATEGIES**

Those that are both arrogant and/or ignorant would cast Iran as being led by a bunch of crazed and over-zealous religious fanatics with little or no sense when it comes to relating and negotiating with the international community. Well, this is simply not the case as Iran is filled with brilliant scholars and savvy political leaders. Consequently, to achieve their objectives via the means available, the Iranians have chosen several strategies when approaching the nuclear issue.

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<sup>96</sup> "Leaders: Misreading Iran; Nuclear proliferation." *The Economist*, January 14, 2006, 12. <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

## **1. The Opposite of Friendly**

Iran has not been shy in 2006 in making threats to its ‘enemies,’ which are, by and large, the U.S. and Israel. The U.S., along with other members of the international community not far behind, has been by far the strongest advocate for no Iranian nuclear weapons and calling for a complete halt to enrichment activities that could lead to weapons capabilities for Iran. Iran has on at least four occasions, most recently on August 13, 2006, threatened to pull out of the NPT if it was deprived of its nuclear ‘rights.’<sup>97</sup>

Officials in Iran waste no time in exploiting the fact that the U.S. is tied down and perhaps over-extended in Iraq. Perhaps this is why the Iranians are behaving in the manner they are, because they perceive the U.S. as being unable to act upon Iranian transgressions. Threats against U.S. forces have at times been subtle and other times blatant, with the latter getting more time in the world press.

Periodically, the Iranians make threats against Gulf shipping lanes. In an act of military showmanship, the Iranians announced that it test-fired a high speed torpedo in the vicinity of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow passage by which all Gulf shipping must pass.<sup>98</sup> There can be no other way to interpret such action, given the weapon and the location, other than being a hostile move gestured at Iranian opponents aka the U.S. and the West.

Iran also has made note of its strategic location in regards to the shipping lanes and has made overtures to threaten the world’s flow of oil as well. Iran has flipped back and forth over whether or not it will use oil as a weapon in resolving its current nuclear conflict with the west, but the most recent stance is one of exploitation. Iran, oddly

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<sup>97</sup> “Iran threatens to pull out of nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” *Iran Focus*, August 13, 2006. <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=8229> (accessed September 2, 2006).

<sup>98</sup> “Iran fires new torpedo in major oil passage,” *Iran Focus*, April 3, 2006. <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=6561> (accessed June 14, 2006).

enough, sees the disruption of oil as the ultimate weapon in its arsenal against the west.<sup>99</sup> However, the truth of the matter is that they rely on the flow of oil and other commerce through Hormuz just as much as other gulf nations.

## **2. Defiant Rhetoric**

In what can be viewed as nearly comical, the Iranians have taken a very consistent and continuous stance of defiance in regards to their nuclear program. It is true, however, that the Iranians have had brief moments of what can be perceived as cooperation, but those moments are random and only at the convenience of Iran. The defiant rhetoric ranges from acts of outright defiance to UN authorities, to subtle forms of disapproval via small items, such as minimal to nonexistent cooperation with IAEA officials. Throughout 2006, Iran has maintained a near-constant claim on its rights to enrich uranium on its own soil, and in an act of defiance of UNSC resolutions, began enriching more uranium the day prior to being ordered to stop.<sup>100</sup>

In 2005, President Ahmadinejad made the assertion that Israel should be wiped off the map. Such outlandish and ridiculous statements infuriated the Jewish nation and successfully heightened their suspicions and distrust of Iran. Yet another, perhaps less obvious reaction, was to instill a sense of zeal and passion for the Iranian president from his marginal followers at home. Such bizarre statements can serve multiple purposes. The Israelis' recent response to this war of words was to publicly remind Iran that it too has the potential to be destroyed, as articulated by Deputy PM Shimon Peres.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> "Iran sees oil disruption as 'ultimate' weapon in the atomic dispute," *Iran Focus* (Bloomberg) June 26, 2006. <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=7731/> (accessed September 2, 2006).

<sup>100</sup> "Iran Enriching More Uranium," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), August 30, 2006. <http://proquest.com/> (accessed August 31, 2006).

<sup>101</sup> "Israel Flexes its Muscles" Al Jazeera.net, May 9, 2006, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/872DE47B-0942-4292-BD32-3CFE31333ACA.htm> (accessed September 7, 2006).

Regardless, the Iranians have gone a step further by twice announcing in 2006 their plans to hold a Holocaust ‘myth or reality’ conference in Tehran.<sup>102</sup> Iran has no love lost for Israel and it would appear they take every opportunity they can to take a jab at Israel. Perhaps this is simply an attempt at deflecting attention away from the controversial Iranian nuclear program but it may well be just hostile rhetoric to rally the Iranian public behind the struggling regime.

In a break with the recent tradition of isolationism, the Iranian president sent a letter to U.S. president Bush with overtures of the potential for future communications between the two nations. This significant event marked a potential thawing in the cold relations between Iran and the U.S. and appeared to be an opportunity to settle differences. The major critique of the letter was that it was more of a critical essay of U.S. foreign policy and the wisdoms of Islamic piety and the like that was not well received by Washington. Once again, the Iranian regime proves to be very creative in its attempts to gain the upper hand in the nuclear standoff currently underway.

### **3. Contradictory Signals**

As far back as February 2002, Iranian officials have made claims that it does not wish to have nuclear weapons for any reason, as it views them as a threat to peaceful coexistence with its neighbors.<sup>103</sup> During this time frame, Admiral Ali Shamkhani, the Iranian defense minister, took the opportunity, in a public statement, to lash out at U.S. president Bush for his comments labeling Iran part of the “axis of evil” and threatened anyone who challenged Iranian sovereignty.<sup>104</sup> This does not mark the first time an Iranian official has presented peaceful and hostile statements during the same announcement, nor will it be the last. In a prepared statement for the IAEA in September 2003, the Iranians stated once again that nuclear weapons are not a goal and that its

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<sup>102</sup>“Iran to host Holocaust conference later this year,” Iran Focus, June 25, 2006.  
<http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=7724&keywords=holocaust+conference/>  
(accessed September 5, 2006).

<sup>103</sup> “Iran rules out nuclear weapons,” *The Guardian*, February 7, 2002.  
[http://www.iranvajahan.net/cgi-bin/news\\_en.pl?l=en&y=2002&m=2&d=7&a=6](http://www.iranvajahan.net/cgi-bin/news_en.pl?l=en&y=2002&m=2&d=7&a=6) (accessed May 9, 2006).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.<sup>105</sup> They also further reiterated Iran's commitment to open cooperation and their commitment to NPT.<sup>106</sup> In fact, President Ahmadinejad recently said, "Our nation doesn't need nuclear weapons. You can use nuclear technology in several ways, and we want to do so peacefully." He went on to say that such weaponry violated the tenets of Islam.<sup>107</sup>

#### **4. Insincere Negotiations**

In April of 2006, when the UN was gearing up for a vote on possible Iranian sanctions, an immediate reaction from Iran was as follows: "If the issue is returned to the International Atomic Energy Agency, we will be ready to allow intrusive inspections," Iran's deputy nuclear chief Mohammed Saeedi told the state-run television.<sup>108</sup> In their always calculating actions, the Iranians have chosen to cooperate when the time is right for them, or claim their desire to cooperate if they feel there will be harsh penalties if they do not.

In May of 2006, Iran complained to the UN about potential U.S. attacks while simultaneously defying UNSC resolutions to stop its enrichment program.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, a senior revolutionary guard commander, Mohammad Ebrahim Dehghani stated that Israel would be Iran's first retaliatory target in response to a U.S. attack.<sup>110</sup> The very next day the Iranian military rejected the statement saying that Dehghani's comments were his personal views and had no validity as far as the Iranian military

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<sup>105</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency, "Statement by the Iranian Government and visiting EU Foreign Ministers," October 21, 2003, [http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaIran/statement\\_iran21102003.shtml/](http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaIran/statement_iran21102003.shtml/) (accessed May 29, 2006).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> "Iran's Leader Shrugs Off Sanctions Threat," ABC.com, January 14, 2006. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1507153&CMP=OTC-RSSFeeds0312> (accessed August 30, 2006).

<sup>108</sup> "Iran moves to prevent UN vote on sanctions." Scotsman.com, April 30, 2006, <http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/international.cfm?id=644692006> (accessed May 3, 2006).

<sup>109</sup> "Iran Complains To UN About U.S." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.org, May 1, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/05/BA386405-5BF2-4A12-8476-B81F3A9EDA95.html> (accessed September 4, 2006).

<sup>110</sup> "Iran Threatens Israel if U.S. Attacks" ABC.com, May 2, 2006. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1914669> (accessed May 3, 2006).

officials were concerned.<sup>111</sup> As seen within the Iranian regime, there are conflicting stories on what signals should or should not be sent and who should send them.

Also in May of 2006, the Iranian parliament threatened to pass legislation that would obligate its government to withdraw from the nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty in the event the U.N. chief and the UNSC failed to resolve the nuclear issue with Iran peacefully.<sup>112</sup> Within days, there would be a message sent stating intentions from Tehran that were quite different. Iranian officials wasted no time in telling the world that Tehran had no intention to withdraw from the NPT and promised to cooperate with IAEA rather than deal with the UNSC.<sup>113</sup> What exactly is intended from such double-talk is unclear, but it does suggest that there is some disunity among the branches of government in Tehran, or perhaps more calculated deceit.

Between January and August of 2006, 270 Web articles relating to the Iranian stance on their nuclear program, were categorized by overall content as to the intended message the Iranians were sending to the West. Table 3 reflects the survey results of various national and international news articles with a large majority of the signals sent from Iran being either hostile or defiant concerning their views on the nuclear issue.

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<sup>111</sup> "Iran Rejects Statement It Would Hit Israel," ABC.com. May 9, 2006. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1919032&CMP=OTC-RSSFeeds0312> (Accessed May 10, 2006).

<sup>112</sup> "Iran Threatens Pullout From Nuclear Treaty; U.S. Backs Push for Tehran to Stop Enrichment." *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), May 8, 2006. <http://proquest.com/> (accessed September 4, 2006).

<sup>113</sup> "Iran Says It Won't Exit Nuclear Treaty," ABC.com, May 9, 2006 <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1940680> (accessed May 9, 2006)

Iranian Signals Jan 06 to Aug 06

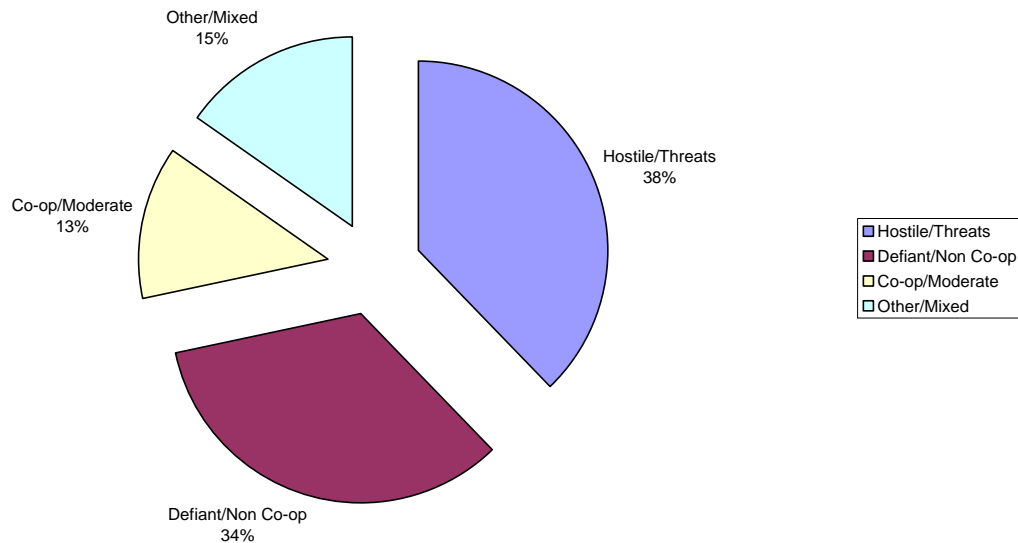


Table 3. Survey results from national and international news articles in 2006.

#### D. IRANIAN STATEMENTS

As previously mentioned, Iran is publicly claiming its rights for nuclear technologies under the auspices of an energy issue. By appealing to the softer side of politics and public opinion, the humane thing for the world to do is allow Iran to pursue nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. This, at least, is the position the Iranians have taken so far. The apparent claim for “peaceful purposes only” technology might be entirely true; however, given Iran’s known history with terrorist organizations and lack-luster cooperation with IAEA, it lacks the necessary trust of the majority of the free world. The evidence brought to the attention of the IAEA by anonymous sources, and excuses by Iranian officials for why this or that agreement is violated, only adds to the distrust.

As of today, in order to meet its energy demands, Iran must import a significant amount of refined petroleum; therefore, nuclear power makes sense, from an economic

standpoint, as it frees up segments of the current oil import demand infrastructure and will allow the Iranians to focus on production for consumption or possible exports for profit, which will inevitably boost their country's productivity. Iran also discovered that it has rich uranium stores that it considers a valuable economic commodity, which it wishes to export as fuel in the future.<sup>114</sup> Given the potential reserves on hand, the current known uranium deposits have the potential to meet the needs of the international market and provide a boost to Iran's ailing economy.

The United States, undoubtedly Iran's most hated enemy, occupies Afghanistan to the East and Iraq to the West. In addition, the U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> fleet, headquartered in Bahrain, is by far the premier Navy in the Arabian Gulf. However, just to show the world and, perhaps more importantly, its own citizens, that it too has a powerful military, Iran continually announces military exercises including ballistic and surface-to-surface missile as well as high speed torpedo tests. In fact, recently the Iranians test-fired a torpedo, in essence signaling their ability to attack Gulf shipping lanes, which may be more of political move than anything else.<sup>115</sup> Military tacticians are well aware of the U.S. maritime and airborne superiority in the region, however, Iran's recent hints at its asymmetric warfare capabilities undoubtedly has Pentagon officials evaluating the situation with a different lens than those without privy to actual DOD information.

## **1. Iranian Public Statements**

September 16, 2002: In a statement from the Iranian Vice President, H.E. Reza Aghazadeh, who is also the president of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, one can get a glimpse into the early stages of the nuclear cat and mouse game that has been occurring between Iran and the West. In his remarks addressed to the 46th General Conference of the IAEA, he goes on to assert his country's right to peaceful energy while

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<sup>114</sup> Ali Akbar Dareini "Iran Announces Plans To Sell Nuclear Fuel :[FINAL Edition]." *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2004, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 12, 2006).

<sup>115</sup> B. C. Kessner, "Analyst: Iran's Missile Test Message More Political Than Military." *Defense Daily International*, April 14, 2006, 1. <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).



simultaneously discussing a need for trust and understanding.<sup>116</sup> What is most interesting, however, is not his attempts to deflect attention away from the issue of nuclear technology and his country via Israel's alleged program, but rather his declaration of Iran's commitment to "transparency," which, to date has yet to materialize. It is indeed the lack of transparency, which he promised on behalf of his country four years ago, and the secrecy and deception of the Iranian nuclear program from its inception that is at the heart of the problem.<sup>117</sup>

With Russian assistance, and in defiance of U.S. demands, a nuclear power plant was built at Bushehr.<sup>118</sup> It was set to begin operations in 2003 but has yet to be completed or commence operations. The Russians had a plan whereby they would supply and retrieve the required fuel rods, which seemed to be a workable plan, until the Iranian regime nixed it and opted for homegrown enriched uranium since it has an adequate supply. Having the ability to enrich its own uranium is an extremely high regime priority. Another controversial site that seems not entirely necessary under the current declared Iranian plans is the Arak heavy water facility.<sup>119</sup>

A nuclear facility was discovered in Natanz, only after the work on the plant was disclosed by a questionable Iranian opposition group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran.<sup>120</sup> At the plant, inspecting officials discovered multiple centrifuges and the

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<sup>116</sup> "Statement by H. E. Reza Aghazadeh Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and President of the Atomic Energy Organization Of Iran at the 46<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency." September 16, 2002. <http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC46/iran.pdf> (accessed June 5, 2006).

<sup>117</sup> Scott Peterson Staff writer of *The Christian Science Monitor* "Iran changes tack in nuclear standoff ; A report on Iran's nuclear program found a 'lack of transparency' as well as 'good progress' on certain issues :[All Edition]." *Christian Science Monitor*, September 6, 2005, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed June 5, 2006).

<sup>118</sup> Guy Dinmore, Andrew Jack, "Russia ignores US over Iranian N-deal : [London edition]." *Financial Times*, December 21, 2002, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

<sup>119</sup> Robin Gedy, "Iran's nuclear history" *Telegraph.co.uk* (October 9, 2003). <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=news/2003/09/10/wiran210.xml/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

<sup>120</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "Inspectors View Nuclear Work At Iranian Site." *New York Times*, February 23, 2003, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 11, 2006).

equipment to construct more. The fear critics and inspectors have is that this comes as a surprise and only after a “tip off.” If this is what they know about, and they first hear of it after a tip, what else is going on that they do not know about? Nuclear research activities are not illegal per se, but not declaring the activity certainly is.

During an IAEA Board of Governors meeting, IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei had this to say concerning the controversial facts about the Iranian program:

However, we are well aware that we are dealing with an issue that concerns a capability — namely enrichment — to produce weapons usable material. And we still have a number of unresolved problems. One is the fact that we have seen different levels of enrichment, different isotopes, and that raises the question of where this enrichment has taken place. Iran maintains that it is the result of contamination. We need to clarify that as early as possible.<sup>121</sup>

In the same statement, which essentially sums up the conflict to date, Dr. ElBaradei also said:

I want to be very clear: if we do not obtain the necessary information and if we do not get immediate and full co-operation by Iran, we will not be able to verify the Iranian programme. And that is in itself a conclusion — that we are unable to verify. But it is not a positive conclusion because it casts doubt on the whole system.<sup>122</sup>

In October 2004, Ex-Iranian President Rafsanjani, who many believe to be more of a moderate and a reformer, had the following to say after it was announced his country had an improved ballistic missile capable of reaching parts of Eastern Europe: “If the Americans attack Iran, the world will change. . . . They will not dare to make such a mistake.” Rafsanjani was quoted while making that statement in a speech at a national

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<sup>121</sup> “Remarks on Iran During the IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, by IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei.” September 9, 2003, Vienna, Austria.  
<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2003/ebsp2003n024.html#iran/> (accessed June 3, 2006).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

security exhibition.<sup>123</sup> While he is no longer the president, his statements are relevant as his role in the regime is head of the “Expediency Council” that answers directly to the supreme leader of Iranian regime.

During November 2004, an AP press release noted that Iran agreed to suspend its enrichment efforts in order to build confidence and trust among the international community in line with implementing the Paris Agreement.<sup>124</sup> Looking back at this event, it seemed like a promising idea. The Iranians knew at the time, as would be proven later, that the move to suspend activities was only temporary. The Iranians’ history of delaying IAEA inspections, to their outright refusal to allow these same inspections, combined with their defiance of world opinion, leads one to consider why they should even bother attempting to negotiate with such predetermined thinkers. The proper answer is that in the world of diplomacy, it is the right thing to do.

In February 2005, Iran announced that it will not stop building a heavy water plant near Arak, which could, theoretically, be used to enrich uranium for nuclear bombs or for medical research.<sup>125</sup> Also in February 2005, senior Iranian negotiator and top cleric, Hassan Rowhani was quoted as saying, “There is a belief among the European negotiators that if they give Iran political security and economic incentives, Iran will give up enrichment... So during this trip we made it quite clear that enrichment is not negotiable,”<sup>126</sup> Essentially the message is clear, the Iranians feel they can do as they please and cooperate at their convenience with few repercussions for their actions.

February 14, 2006: Iran resumes enrichment in defiance of IAEA agreements and international pressure. Iran states it has re-initiated small-scale enrichment of uranium, ending a two-and-a-half-year voluntary suspension, but said it was willing to

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<sup>123</sup>“Iran’s Missiles Can Now Hit Europe, Ex-Official Says : [Final Edition].” *The Washington Post*, October 6, 2004, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed May 30, 2006).

<sup>124</sup> “Iran Suspends Uranium Enrichment,” Iran Focus, Associated Press, November 22, 2005, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=812/> (accessed June 1, 2006).

<sup>125</sup> “Iran threatens to resume uranium enrichment,” Iran Focus, February 13, 2005, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=1473/> (accessed June 1, 2006).

<sup>126</sup> “Iran says enrichment activities not negotiable,” Iran Focus; AFP, February 27, 2005, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=1577/> (accessed June 1, 2006).

resume talks with Russia the following week concerning the Russian proposal to enrich a low level of Iran's uranium in Russia.<sup>127</sup> The end to a "voluntary" suspension that again occurred in June 2006, while still negotiating terms with the EU3, presumably signals to the world that Iran is serious about its inalienable rights of nuclear technology and will not be bullied by international pressures.<sup>128</sup> President Ahmadinejad is also quoted as saying: "On behalf of the Iranian nation, I'm announcing that the Iranian nation will never hold negotiations about its inalienable rights with anybody, but we are for talks about mutual concerns to resolve misunderstandings in the international arena."<sup>129</sup>

#### **E. IMPACT: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL POLITICS**

To assure its hold on legitimacy, anyone who questions Iran's right to produce nuclear energy is branded by the regime as an enemy of Iran. So in a very real sense, this is a unifying discussion item skillfully exploited by Iranian politicians as they see fit. To that end, past and recent history has shown them that the only talk that the West understands is tough talk. Previous negotiations over energy, like those concerning oil and Great Britain during the 1950s, were fruitless, as is the current climate in regards to nuclear energy negotiations among Iranian politicians.

Unlike the Shah or Mohammed Mossadegh from the 1950's era, President Ahmadinejad has, at times, strong factional support and at other times, not as much. By and large he has (at least on the surface) the confidence of the Iranian people who, behind closed doors, may well be opposed. However likely this may be, it is difficult to prove without credible intelligence sources on the inside. As it stands now, Iran is being fairly closed off to the West, closely guarding what information it chooses to release. This in and of itself becomes problematic when attempting to conduct analyses of multiple issues.

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<sup>127</sup> "World Briefing Middle East: Iran: Uranium Enrichment Confirmed," Nazila Fathi (Nyt). New York Times (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: February 15, 2006, 8

<sup>128</sup> Elaine Sciolino "Iran Resumes Uranium Enrichment Work." *New York Times*, June 9, 2006, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/> (accessed September 12, 2006).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

## **1. Iranian Political Climate**

Today, there is little “apparent” friction between the supreme leader, the Iranian people, and President Ahmadinejad. The relationship between the president and the supreme leader has not often been smooth in the past, but in the end, they know who is really in charge. Given the bizarre rhetoric from Ahmadinejad, many Iranian officials and citizens alike must cringe when he goes on and on about death to Israel and the less-than-kind statements about the U.S. or President Bush. For the most part, they stand united behind their charismatic leader and their country’s right to nuclear energy and anti-western/imperialistic ideals. Yet, there is as of late, a growing trend in Iran to question the stability of the popular support of the current regime with the numerous scandals surrounding elections.

In a surprise upset, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was then the ultra-conservative mayor of Tehran, won the June 2005 Iranian presidential election in a runoff against reformist Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani. This ushered in a new political scene in Iranian politics as it marks a key moment in the continuing struggle between the conservatives and the reformers, with the lead now going to the conservatives. In October 2005, at the “The World without Zionism,” conference, President Ahmadinejad called Israel a “disgraceful blot” and openly said it should be “wiped off the map.”<sup>130</sup> While seemingly outrageous and quite callous, such statements can be powerful coercive tools at home and abroad. The threat is implicitly directed at Israel but will the Iranians act on it? More likely than not, the comments were directed at those present at the rally in an effort to gain more internal political support at home in Iran. These threats, however, cannot be ignored by the international community, especially in Israel. Israel already has an increasingly difficult security dilemma with Gaza, Golan, and the occupied West Bank, not to mention threats from radical groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon to the North.

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<sup>130</sup>“THE WORLD; Iranian President Says Israel should be ‘Wiped Off the Map’; Ahmadinejad’s Harsh Rhetoric Marks a Sharp Departure from His Predecessor’s Policy. The U.S. and Others Condemn the Speech.” *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 2005.

The problem with such rash and seemingly irrational statements comes from the way they are interpreted and by whom they are interpreted. There are perceptions and misperceptions, which in international relations are key factors in rendering decisions.<sup>131</sup> There is a history of Iranian support for terrorist groups being very active in and around Israel. The Iranian leadership and senior clerics are frequently calling attention to the plight of the Palestinians and questioning the legitimacy for Israel to exist let alone occupy territory it acquired from previous Arab/Israeli conflicts. Therefore, with all the secrecy and suspicion around the Iranian nuclear program, combined with Iran's recent revolutionary history, it is well within the realm of normalcy for the entire world to be wary of Iran's nuclear intentions.

The Iranian regime has significant political unrest internal to its borders. This unrest begins with the economically challenged and repressed people, as well as within the walls of the regime which leads the country. Because of the nuclear issue, many investors have pulled out of the Iranian markets and gone elsewhere for business. As the economy suffers, the people naturally get agitated and outspoken. In a theocracy, the reality is that there are very few, if any, political freedoms and, as such, for the world to hear about the problems inside Iran speaks volumes to the issue.

In Iran, the effects and memory of colonialism are all too recent to easily forget. At the core of the issue concerning nuclear weapons are sovereignty and national will. Nowhere in history does one see a formally conquered, oppressed, or occupied peoples wish to return to the previous conditions. Yet, while the decades have passed, the same formerly occupying powers are still attempting to assert their political will on a foreign nation. As a result, Iranian nationalistic attitudes and feelings are most strong now, especially when placed parallel with notions of outsider, or as is often the case, U.S./European-Western style interference. Speeches, such as the one given by President

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<sup>131</sup> Jervis and Harvard University. Center for International Affairs. *The Logic of Images in International Relations*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970, 4.

Bush in his State of the Union (September 2002), branding Iran part of the “axis of evil” certainly do not help to diplomatically calm the growing tensions that clearly divide the peoples of two nations.<sup>132</sup>

## **2. Iranian Public Views**

Iran, in particular, is one of the most misunderstood countries in the world and, because of this, its current intentions and motives are questionable. Iran, to this day, considers itself a regional power, much like the “India of the 1970s.” The Iranians very much resent the fact that other regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel get the proverbial nod while Iran deals with the effects of sanctions. Iranians are a very proud people and cherish their rich national history and, as a nation, just want the respect they feel entitled to. An entire generation has now been brought up under the effects of sanctions and been force-fed rhetoric of the evils of the West. One need only look at the murals painted on the side of the former U.S. embassy in Tehran to see the intense level of hate. To assert that the entire populace feels such horrid things about the U.S. is absurd, but the fact remains that any outsider or person against the regime is carefully watched.

The Iranian people may, from time to time, dislike the leadership or powers in place, but they very much understand that regimes come and go, but the glory goes to the nation and that is where centuries of existence have taught them to place their loyalties. Iranians desire the same things that all countries desire; they wish to develop a strong and stable economy. Iran would like to increase its industrial capacity to compete on a global scale and it has aspirations of being recognized as a great regional player. Given its rich and prolific history, it does not seem too far off the mark with any of these desires. The major problems it has faced in the past, as well as in the present is what they perceive as meddling outsiders, aka the West.

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<sup>132</sup> George W. Bush, “The President’s State of the Union Address The United States Capitol.” Washington, DC Office of the Press Secretary, White House. January 29, 2002. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html/> (accessed June 3, 2006).

The Iranian nuclear program is a source of national pride, a unifying topic, in that it is an inalienable right to pursue such technologies. It is insulting to common Iranians to question their right to nuclear power for peaceful purposes or otherwise, while the West turns the other cheek to countries such as Israel who they suspect has nuclear weapons, and India and Pakistan who have confirmed weapons technologies. These very same countries receive loads of economic aid from the U.S. so in a sense they are rewarded for breaking with international norms of the NPT, which most of the world follows. The question for the Iranians is often as simple as: ‘Why should we abide by the NPT treaty at all?’ Like the case during the 1950’s oil crisis, the Iranians did not like being taken advantage of, and they particularly do not like being told what to do with things that are naturally well within their rights as a sovereign nation to pursue.

A unique situation arises when the threat of sanctions is introduced into this complex equation. The Iranian economy, as of today, is not thriving. Several prominent Iranian journalists, economists, and, most notably, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, have voiced increasing concern over their government’s reputation in the international arena.<sup>133</sup> In a country with significant disparity between the “haves” and “have nots” the threat of sanctions can only make a bad situation economically, even worse. These prominent people, like many Iranians, support the idea of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but fear their government lacks the credibility to argue the case.<sup>134</sup>

## **F. ANALYSIS: WHAT WENT WRONG AND WHY**

The Iranians are exercising their rights under article IV of the NPT which allows nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, they are failing to respect the provisions of article III.<sup>135</sup> Article III calls for the assurances required by the international community in order to gain the confidence of the world. The Iranians have lost this trust

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<sup>133</sup> Iran: Civil society alarmed over UN Security Council referral. Available on the Internet, [http://www.adnki.com/index\\_2Level\\_English.php?cat=Politics&luid=8.0.274487649&par=](http://www.adnki.com/index_2Level_English.php?cat=Politics&luid=8.0.274487649&par=) (accessed April 23, 2006).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> “Treaty on The Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.” April 22, 1970. <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf> (accessed June 1, 2006).



through years of indifference to the rules and because of secret programs that, only once discovered, are revealed. This lack of trust is by far the largest failure in Iranian foreign policy.

In the case of nuclear energy, Iran's ties with terrorist organizations, combined with its reputation for impulsivity, make its predictability for peaceful nuclear power use suspect. Without the trust of the West, Iran will continue to meet with Western resistance and the possibility of future aggressions. Such aggressions will most likely take the form of economic disincentives, rather than immediate military action. At the same time, how naïve is it to think that the Iranians just want nuclear energy for peaceful purposes? They will have then grown beyond the economic chip they have on their shoulders, having gained complete control over their own oil and energy needs once they move into the "nuclear club" where only the most elite and prestigious powers get a seat at the table.

Iran has made many threats over the last four years to Europeans, Israelis, and the United States. These threats are overtly aimed at militaries and world economics; they need to be placed in the context of their actual coercive biting power. It is true that these threats have to be taken into consideration, but their effectiveness at deterring the world from wanting to restrict Iran's nuclear ambitions is questionable at best. It's clear by its actions that Iran is a country highly skilled in negotiations and political rhetoric, but those are not true indices of what they intend to do. If anything, the smoke screen that they refer to as diplomacy only makes the perceptions of their intent worse.

## **G. CONCLUSIONS**

In the end, what the true intent of the signals sent by the Iranians is not 100 percent clear. The use of force to protect Iranian sovereignty is clear in that they will defend themselves. How and when they will do that is another issue. What is not clear, when such statements are used, is whether they are threatening neighbors, or simply stating facts regarding their abilities. The strong hard-line signals conveyed by the Ayatollah, President Ahmadinejad, or any other regime representative, must be taken with a grain of salt, albeit a cautious grain. Hitler was once seen as a raving fool just full of threats and idle words. The world later found out otherwise. Does that mean the

world should expect action out of Iran based on what it says? Not exactly, but it would behoove all participants of the international community to treat them with a certain level of respect and caution.

After reviewing the pertinent information, the conclusion reached is that the entire program has been one of deception. Treaty obligations stipulate that Iran must declare all nuclear activities, yet they have consistently failed to do so in a timely and cooperative fashion. There is no concrete evidence to say that Iran is definitely planning a nuclear weapon and the facts, when pieced together, strongly signal otherwise. IAEA staff reports are written in diplomatic language and will doubtfully ever have plain language such as, “the Iranians lied without substantial proof.” When faced with the truth about “false reports” to the IAEA, the Iranians have frequently come up with a myriad of plausible reasons why the facts were not straight and, as such, justify their lack of compliance. The documentation by the IAEA speaks volumes about what is happening in Iran’s nuclear program to suggest that they are, in fact, after nuclear weapons but due to various political pressures, have yet to go on record as saying that Iran indeed wants nuclear weapons technologies.

Recently, Iran seemed to be making overtures about its willingness to make minor concessions. But even these attempts at appeasing the West were tainted with defiant rhetoric placing terms and conditions about their nuclear rights on the negotiations such that the saga continues. Iran has not truly signaled its actual intent in regards to its nuclear program. If it has, the world has missed it, which once again coincides with the framework laid out by Jervis back in the 1960s. But it has signaled its military and economic fears vis-à-vis public statements and press releases. Time and time again they have warned against sanctions and military strikes. So frequent are these statements that it is nearly impossible to not logically deduce that these are the Iranians’ two biggest fears.

Rather than the two theoretical models presented, a more likely true measure of effectiveness, in regards to the interstate bargaining frameworks described by Schelling and Jervis, is a more pragmatic approach. The Iranian facts laid out over time speak to those who will listen when placed next to a lack of transparency mixed with deceit and

defiance. It is still speculative, but if it looks like a duck and sounds like a duck, it is in fact a duck. Given Iran's perceived threats, current military capabilities, and resources on hand, it is extremely plausible for them to pursue a nuclear weapons program under any guise. Regardless of whether they are members of the NPT, it would not make the world feel more comfortable.

Effective communication is essential to the success of negotiations and interactions on all levels. It starts with the truth and ends with the disappearance of denial and deceit. An unstable bargaining framework resulting from inadequate or flawed communication between Iran and the West can lead to escalation of conflict and war through miscalculation of intent or purely by accident. This potential war, by nature, may well include nuclear weapons, which would then likely involve the United States and various regional actors. In fact, the ensuing conflict caused by Iranian miscommunications could spread throughout the region. For centuries, the Iranians/Persians have been cast aside by both Arab Sunni and Westerner alike. They are tired of it and are now looking for more respect.

## V. CONCLUSION

### A. SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED/ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

There are various factors involved in the signaling process which are not as cut and dried as Morse code or Semaphore. In order for one to possibly know a nation's intent, he must carefully observe a multitude of factors. These may range from its past history of actions in the international arena to its internal political proceedings; but even then, by analyzing all the relevant data presented, there can be no guarantee of a proper interpretation of the signal. Looking at this issue from the framework presented by Schelling or Jervis and then attempting to predict even Iran's intent is all but fruitless. There are simply too many factors to be considered to be assured that the signal is received correctly.

As stated above, Robert Jervis posits that the interstate bargaining system is ineffective at best and problematic at worst. Thomas Schelling suggests that compellence, coercion, and deterrence can be applied by a nation in order to achieve its desired goals and objectives as part of the interstate bargaining process.<sup>136</sup> Schelling further believes that a state's nuclear weapons can play a role in the interstate bargaining process by discouraging actions it did not approve of and can even change its behavior.<sup>137</sup> While Schelling's notions on nuclear bargaining are theoretically accurate, it has been proven that nations only fear nuclear devices in so much as they fear a sovereign nation's willingness to actually employ the weapon.

Consequently, the question as presented earlier revolved around this notion: do either of these theories have a basis that would allow the onlooker to determine the intent of the nation in question? With that in mind, this thesis sought to test two competing theoretical models, whether coercion and compellence are effective, or whether the alternative interstate communications system that is currently in place is in fact flawed.

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<sup>136</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>137</sup> James A. Russell, Nuclear Strategy and The Modern Middle East. *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XI, No. 3, Fall 2004.

Upon review, it has been determined that the current stand off is at times consistent with signaling frameworks described by Jervis, and yet at other times consistent with the notions presented by Schelling. Therefore, rather than limit oneself to a this or that theoretical model in determining a nation's intent, a more pragmatic approach, which takes into consideration a variety of variables, would be a considerably more effective proposition.

Granted, with the present example, Iran has not in fact signaled its actual intent in regards to its nuclear program. If it has, analysts and politicians throughout the world have missed it, which once again coincides with the framework laid out by Jervis back in the 1960s. Yet at the same time, Iran continues to proceed forward with its nuclear program despite political threats and allegations by the West, and as such, the theories of compellence and coercion are, in a sense, validated by this particular case study. Iran shrewdly recognizes the fact that the United States is essentially bogged down in an economically and politically expensive wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq. It also realizes the overall significance of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), combined with the disbursed nature of its nuclear facilities, and comes to the logical conclusion that there is no immediate threat from the Western powers that oppose its nuclear program.

Yet, if the Iranian defenses were in fact vulnerable to attack and to the destruction of either its nuclear research facilities its or military site for that matter, it is not clear whether they would be compelled to behave in a manner consistent with the wishes of the international community. The reasoning for this assertion comes from the examples set by the multiple military conflicts of both the United States and Israel; the latter is assumed to possess nuclear weapons and the former who most certainly does. Both these nations are assumed to have the ability to annihilate an enemy if it chooses, yet lesser military powers and various non-state actors have knowingly entered into conflicts, with some degrees of success, with both of these nuclear powers.

For this reason, the possession of nuclear weapons by sovereign nations is, in a sense, not as persuasive a device as many would believe. In the end, a more prudent look at key indices such as Gross National Product (GNP) and economic trends in key industries would potentially provide a clear lens to look through when attempting to

decipher a nation's intentions as telegraphed through various signals. Likewise, it would also serve both the recipient and the sender to consider the other nation's internal and external political climate while making logical sense of the signals presented, rather than naively interpreting mixed signals, or counting on the effects of coercion and compellance.

## **B. REASONS WHY IT IS SO DIFFICULT TO KNOW IF SIGNALS ARE BEING RECEIVED**

When attempting to understand the complexities of the signaling process, it must be understood that past interactions between nations strongly influence the views of both the sender and receiver and thus the way the message is sent, deciphered, or interpreted. In the case of Iran, a generation has now been raised under the effects of sanctions, and of those individuals, many have been successfully manipulated by the Iranian regime into believing the unbalanced rhetoric directed against the "evil" West. However bizarre this sounds to the lay person, there is a certain level of truth to the Iranian regime's rhetoric based on past interactions with the West, which justifiably gives them reason to be suspicious of western signals and motives.

Furthermore, sovereign nations intended to be the recipient of signals may not pay attention to the signals sent, as is likely the case with Iran due to the Iranian regime's obscure status in dealing with terrorist organizations and its reputation for impulsivity. In the current Iranian example, there is a lack of perceived trust on the part of the West, which is the result of questionable Iranian activities and this, in point of fact, influences the way messages are effectively interpreted by Western officials. The issue of trust is directly linked to issues of credibility. In order for the recipient to fully accept the signal the sender is attempting to put forth, there must be some sense, on the part of the recipient, that the sender is sincere in what it is saying and/or capable of carrying out what in fact it states it is capable of doing. Whether or not the signal is received, in this case, depends on recipients' willingness to listen.

By the same token, proverbial walls are erected that hinder the effective use of signals as was the case during President Bush's State of the Union (September 2002)

address in which he branded Iran part of the “axis of evil.”<sup>138</sup> By essentially insulting the Iranian regime, the president planted seeds of distrust and resentment among the population, which give the Iranian regime credibility in its anti-Western rhetoric. This does little to foster positive and effective communication between the two nations. What it illustrates is that not only are lies and deception capable of placing barriers to effective communication, but insults and condescending attitudes are just as powerful in effectively diminishing a nation’s perceived credibility.

What’s more, political speeches and press releases are often used to pass signals of intent to other nations, yet frequently the intended audience is not known at that time. Regularly heard in political speeches are apparent threats that can be misinterpreted, as the intended recipient of such political rhetoric may be internal or external to that particular nation. It is ill advised to automatically assume who the intended recipient is or is not at the time, because if the assumption is incorrect, then the signal’s intent is lost. The exact level and nature of the political threats, therefore, is problematic due to the dual use of threats. Threats may be used to influence adversaries and/or they may be used to rally and unify waning internal political support for the regime.

Additionally, circumstances develop where the recipient sees or hears something in the signal of intent that may or may not be present. Potential signals of intent then take on added significance, because there may be unintended signals imbedded in the communication that complicate the process due to the arbitrary manner in which they are interpreted. Not only that, but the sender of the signal may even intentionally send out false signals, for a myriad of reasons, which, either confuse the potential recipients or leave them ignoring the signal entirely.

In the end, the interpretation of signals of intent is quite complicated. Signals of intent are difficult to interpret, for a variety of reasons ranging from lack of trust and credibility, to past experiences that taint perceptions by all. Even making an assumption can have dangerous effects on the entire signaling process. In any given culture, a

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<sup>138</sup> George W. Bush. “The President’s State of the Union Address The United States Capitol.” Washington, D.C. Office of the Press Secretary, White House. January 29, 2002. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html/> (accessed June 3, 2006).

particular statement may have a completely different meaning, may quite reasonably be misinterpreted, or it may be innocently misconstrued thereby nullifying the message sent.

### **C. IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES**

As it has been determined that the current signaling process is less than perfect, the issue remains as to what the likely consequences or repercussions of this cumbersome process might be. If not carried out in an efficient and professional manner, the consequences of faulty communications can have counter-productive and even disastrous results. The credibility of a nation's effective political clout in the international arena can easily be degraded or deemed insufficient if the signals it sends out are misinterpreted or worse, viewed as irrelevant and therefore ignored. Active communications, if not adequately maintained, can also lead to long-term effects on perceptions, which in turn further influence policy and decision makers, to the extent that either for political or personal reasons, refuse to see or completely ignore the signals sent by the offending country.

Point in fact: prejudices often taint the essence of the message. This causes the objectivity of a nation to be obscured by, among other things, past relations, and thus the slanted views based on these previous interactions. As such, the lasting effect on the political apparatus is to create artificial barriers to communications and to further cultivate such barriers in future interactions. The net effect of these misperceptions and tainted views is to cloud the signal and hinder the signaling process, both of which potentially make the world a more dangerous place.

Accordingly, this leads to the exploitation of political rhetoric and the chain reaction that may ensue following the initial implementation of aggressive rhetoric. In essence, political rhetoric must be kept in perspective before it spirals out of control and becomes a situation that is undesirable. Simply because President Ahmadinejad, in his political addresses, says something callous and seemingly threatening with a fiery zeal does not necessarily mean impending conflict is imminent. By the same token, it should be noted that coercive power and the ideas of compellance do have value on the international scene and are not to be completely dismissed; they must simply be kept in



perspective. In essence, escalating rhetoric can lead to, at a minimum, a war of words and, at its worst, political isolation or military conflict.

Conversely, in opposition to the various forms of political rhetoric is discourse shrouded in ambiguity or a complete lack of diplomatic dialogue. At present, secrecy, symbolic disclosure of required reporting, and a lack of open communication are several of the major factors influencing world opinion against the current Iranian nuclear program. With a lack of effective communications, nations are left to dangerously assume the other's intent, sometimes accurately, but often times incorrectly. In the absence of active and effective communication, international affairs are left to chance and happenstance, both of which are highly undesirable in the international arena due to the random nature of their unpredictable outcomes. As the current events on the global scene are carried out, the ability of the parties in question to effectively communicate intentions is questionable, at best, which leaves the process unstable and all parties less secure.

#### **D. FOREIGN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Michael A. Levi, an expert on nuclear issues and Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) fellow for science and technology, recently said in an interview that Iran's response to the Security Council's demand to halt its nuclear processing in return for concessions appears to be "a compromise between different factions."<sup>139</sup> This tends to imply what has been previously noted: that there are those within Iran who wish to avoid potentially damaging economic sanctions and then there are those proud Iranians fed up with the overbearing west. At this stage, it would be political suicide for Ahmadienijad to completely back down to Western pressures as he is happy to ride the wave of defiance that goes a long way toward solidifying his political stability. With this in mind, it would be most prudent for western officials to proceed with a sense of caution and sensibility in regards to forming current and future Iranian foreign policy initiatives.

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<sup>139</sup> Interview: Levi: Iranian Nuclear Response Seems 'Compromise' among Factions, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11348/> Accessed September 2, 2006.

For this reason, the most sensible way to approach the signaling process between nations, so as not to potentially misinterpret signals, is a more pragmatic, as opposed to idealistic, approach. Politicians cannot afford to make assumptions based strictly on theories presented by the likes of Schelling or Jervis. While it is true that each has very strong and valid points not to be overlooked, the reality is that one must take into consideration a myriad of factors before reaching a conclusion as to what a nation's intention might possibly be. Consequently, by concentrating on the reality and on practical matters, policy and decision makers will have a clearer vision of the circumstances at hand. By dealing with the relevant situation in practical terms versus ideals, theories, or generic principles, the politician will then be in an improved position to apply sound and educated judgment to the situation. By doing so, the policy maker will then be better able to focus on what is achievable, rather than what is necessarily a desirable or ideal state of affairs.

Alternatively, there are those who promote economic sanctions as a means to signal international resolve. If this is the course of action deemed most appropriate by the United States, its allies, and the international community, then there should only be genuine attempts at economic and political isolation. While the Iranians are exposed to partial political and economic isolation, it is not absolute isolation, and thus not as effective as it allows goods and services to be acquired through other nations who don't enforce or agree with the sanctions. Therefore, taking this lesson and applying it to the broader picture, all bordering and neighboring nations must be involved in this critical process and no single country should try to impose its own brand of sanctions. With today's economic and political globalization, those nations that choose to go it alone are seen as aggressors, while those who form coalitions of the willing are seen as banding together for a homogeneous cause. It is with the cooperation of the international community that the United States should continue to pursue solutions to problems that affect the entire world.

In the same way, it should be recognized that all countries have national self interests and ulterior motives, i.e., the Chinese and Russian Arms deals with the Iranians while both are members of the "Big Five" and who also have the power to impose or veto

United Nations-sponsored sanctions. However, as discussed in this paper, the Western nations would do well to accept the inevitability that Iran will be a nuclear nation as it is now simply a matter of time. The best way to stop an enemy is to make them an ally. Rather than find ways to stop the process, those with the technology should become involved in the process. After all, the NPT requires it; now it is Iran's turn to start faithfully cooperating with the West.

In the final analysis, it is recommended that in addition to a more pragmatic approach to international discourse, more of an emphasis needs to be placed on breaking down the political walls that divide nations, along with working to establish trust and cooperation between both ally and adversary. That is to say, more effort needs to be placed on de-escalating the sort of political rhetoric that runs parallel with the "Axis of Evil" talk as it simply puts up walls versus bringing them down. Perhaps an even worse option than escalating and insulting rhetoric is the deliberate insertion of barriers to communications between nations. One of the most unusual facets of the current Iranian nuclear conflict with the West is the fact that there are no direct ties between two of the key players: the United States and Iran. It is an acutely obvious recommendation to establish diplomatic ties between the two nations and for them to engage in direct dialogue. To rely on the current signaling process is too cumbersome and too unpredictable for it to be the only means of signaling intentions between nations. To help relieve suspicions of doubt, direct dialogue should be the preferred method for overcoming the ambiguities of the signaling process.

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